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NOTES
ON THE COMPOSITION
OF
SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

BY

RT. HON. SIR T. CLIFFORD ALLBUTT

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

THE first and second editions of this little book found a rapid sale, and a third edition, was, and still is, urgently demanded. I wished to revise the book before its re-issue, but in this purpose I was prevented by many personal engagements and, above all these, by the Great War. The welcome of the book was due, I believe, to its informal conversation the topical criticisms of a teacher upon essays submitted to him for discussion and revision. In the course of the year I peruse seventy or eighty theses for the degree of M.B. and about thirty for the degree of M.D. The matter of these theses is good, often excellent; in composition some are fair, and a few are good, but the greater number are written badly, some very ill indeed. The prevailing defect of their composition is not mere inelegance; were it so, it were unworthy of educated men; it is such as to perplex, and even to travesty or to hide the author's meaning. Thus, for the judge who would be just, many of the theses are hard reading; and, meritorious as in substance they may be, are as they stand unfit for the printer.

The use of thesis-writing is rarely to announce discoveries, usually to train the mind of the writer, or to prove that his mind has been trained; the former purpose is, I trust, promoted, the evidences of the latter are too often scanty. So when the Act is kept, we are often forced, against our desire, to dwell on faults of form to some neglect of the main argument. It seemed to me therefore that, by a setting forth once for all of the common literary errors and defects, I might at least so economise censures of the form as to devote myself mainly to the content.

It is far from my intention in these simple instructions to advocate a manner of writing in which pith and character are lost in polish or affected elegance; indeed, my purpose is literary only so far as to insist on the qualities of clearness, precision, and definition. Yet it must not be supposed that "mere literary form" is but a toilette, a skin-deep quality. As a young student is now educated it is hard for him to dress his matter so that it flows easily into the mind of the reader. He is apt to think that an easy style comes of letting himself go; and that a glaze can be put on by any tiresome pedant. He is unaware that an easy limpid consecutive style is the result of consummate craftsmanship (p. 10). No quality was won by more labour than, for example, the "ease" of Montaigne; no manuscript was more anxiously revised and

corrected than his (pp. 10-28). As Pope put it :

True ease in writing comes from art not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

A certain nicety of dress and manners is no bad index of more intimate qualities. It has been well said that one cannot be a gentleman for important occasions only. At times there is, to be sure, in a few great men of letters, as in Scott for example, a noble carelessness of attire (p. 52); but he who discovers in himself so transcendent a creative power is far above my counsels.

The "style is the man," it reflects a phase of his biography; a gift for letters and ideas may be inherited, but command of language, order, and rhythm come with an art which is learned in part by education, and experience of life, in part by converse with good literature. How can a young man learn to write well whose converse is only with the rubbish of the bookstalls?

Some of my critics have been a little sore about my remarks on the ready-made clothes of the journalist. It would be inconsiderate indeed to forget the severity of the pressure of time under which the newspaper must be written, the ogreish hunger of the public for coarse stimulants, or, on the other hand, the fair level of writing which is attained nevertheless—at any rate in journals of the higher standard; the journalist however belongs to a select class, and is moreover a writer by

profession, so that if he did not write better than a troop of amateurs it would be deplorable indeed.

Coleridge said that in letters there had been three great revolutions: the first when the professions fell from the Church; the second when literature fell from the professions; the third when the Press fell from literature. We scientists also, who above all men should be clear and precise, are said on all sides, including our own, to have "fallen from literature." Let us listen to what three competent witnesses have to say of us.

Take first a few sentences from a letter of Prof. Bryan, in *Nature* of April 7, 1904. .

"If a paper (for the Royal Society) is of any value, the author must *ipso facto* know more about the subject-matter than any one else. If he does not he is not the proper man to write the paper. But it is just because authors so frequently send up papers in a form in which other people cannot understand them that referees are necessary. The functions of a referee should be to see that the arguments in a paper are clearly put forward, and that the main conclusions are prominently stated at the beginning or end in such a way that a general survey of the ground covered can be formed by the reader before the methods are examined in detail. At present few people have time to wade through pages and pages of discursive and ill-explained writings on the off chance that they may ultimately

light on an interesting result. Now I have before me a number of mathematical papers which contain no indication whatever of what the authors are driving at." If this be the case of mathematical papers what is that of current papers in the more and more complex and discursive departments of science?

The Public Orator of Oxford writes:¹ "Students of natural science are beginning to see that the reason why they have been comparatively little in demand for administrative posts is not to be sought in mere jealousy or conservatism but in the simple fact that many of them have not been trained in the art of making themselves intelligible." Only too true; but is not "administrative" english at least as bad as ours; and commercial english even worse? How often have we to re-peruse official documents and reports to decide which of alternative meanings is to be adopted as the least unlikely? Shall we not put the descending order of literary merit thus: Journalist, Scientist, Official, Commercial?

Thirdly, Mr. Eggar, well known as a science master at Eton, reports² that "science masters have to begin by teaching the boys to write english; boys who have spent some years on the classical side of a public school. They are unable to write with clear meaning, or even to read english intelligibly."

¹ *Class. Rev.*, Dec. 1917.

² Quoted in *Nature*, July 22, 1922.

He has found that it takes two years to make in them "a respectable style."

If now it be my part to dwell upon form I would not have it supposed that I am forgetting the essential values of matter. Between the inward and outward forms of development it is true that no definite mark can be drawn. As we pass outwards from the substance to the fashion of thought, and may read even in the airiest lines of it the character of the author, so the virtues of chastity and the significance of fashion have their reflection upon substance. It is true that the pedant is not confined to the academy, and to cavil at words is easier than to arrive at a judgment upon the matter of them; and it shall not be said of us that in refinement of manner and amenity of form we become too exquisite for the breadth, depth, and strength of the individual mind.

Certain critics have argued that, as such and such a use, which I may have disapproved, is quoted by the *New English Dictionary*, therefore the use is justified. No one would have resented such a protest more than the late editor-in-chief of that monumental work. A dictionary may give select uses or all uses; the editor of the *New English Dictionary* decided, wisely in my opinion, to give all uses, and to leave to the inquirer the function of comparing them and their sources for himself. The *Dictionary* "sanctions" nothing of its

contents, but enables us by examination of its stores to compare and choose for ourselves. In using this liberty we shall neither be subservient to the prescriptions of age nor scornful of modern freedom; in every use we shall be guided by historical growth, the example of the best authors, and our present necessities.

In obedience to a general desire I have divested these critical notes of the peculiarly scientific features of the first edition; while preserving their immediate purpose, many of my medical instances have been exchanged for others of a pleasanter kind; nevertheless this manual is intended chiefly for medical students, and is concerned therefore not with letters as a whole but with so much of the form and correctness of scientific papers as my experience tells me is perverted or neglected by their authors.

Quotations are given for the most part without references; for obvious reasons.

In the preparation of the first and second editions of this little book I avoided Grammars, Guides to Composition, and the like; because my humbler purpose was to gossip on the way with our pupils about their daily essays and papers, not to drill them. However, as the book was reaching a far wider circle, and my responsibility so increasing, I fetched an armful of such manuals from the University Library. But none did I find to be of use for me. They were too long or elaborate; stiff,

prim, pedagogic to the verge of tedium, and beyond. They offered formulas and logic where I wanted nature and art. The sections on grammar especially seemed to me buckram; conventions dressed into rules, idioms into laws; attempts to trick out such wisps of grammar as survive in english, after the fashion of latin or greek syntax; these systems seemed to me factitious.

But in my arnful one good book I did find, though, as its purport was hardly mine, I could not make much direct use of it. I commend to my readers *The Philosophy of Speech*, by George Willis (London, 1919). I was content to observe that the author of this work also found fault with the english grammars as too artificial.

Dr. MacLane Wood, Director of the U.S.A. Geological Survey, kindly sent me copies of their *Suggestions to Authors*, and other pamphlets of good counsel both in respect of literary quality and of arrangement of MSS. for the printer. From these useful guides I have taken a few hints.

Finally, let us hug the truth; whether it be of imagination, fancy, wit, humour, knowledge, or word; remembering the doctrine of Plato: "False words are not only in themselves evil but they infect the soul with evil."

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY	1

On academic essays. Choice of subjects of scientific essays. Their titles. Definitions. Form. Names and terms. Lucidity. Methods of composing. Revisions. Logic of an essay. Summaries. Beginnings and ends. References. Dictation. Anyhow will do! Precision. Formalism. Growth and decay in language. Gaudiness. Slang. Obsolescent words.

CHAPTER II

ON COMPOSITION	49
--------------------------	----

Creation of instrument of language. Grammar. Principles and gerunds. The chapter. The paragraph. The sentence. Order of clauses. Suspension. Split infinitive. Choppy sentences. Order of words. Choice of words. Etymology. Parts of speech. Feeble verbs. Exuberance of adjective. Meagre vocabulary. Tags and mannerisms. Misused words. Superfine words. Misused latin words. Tautology and redundancy. Emphasis. Metaphor. Abstract style. Quotations. Sound. Accent. Punctuation. Little counsels. Models of prose.

APPENDIX	189
--------------------	-----

INDEX	191
-----------------	-----

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

It is in no desire to curtail my conversations with candidates for degrees in Medicine that I publish a few notes or hints on the composition of scientific papers. The larger conditions of method and matter cannot be reduced to notes; they will always be with us for counsel and inquiry: but there are lesser conditions, the economy of argument, the handling of common knowledge and ideas, the use of authority, the forms and aids of expression, which must be observed in all exercises of the kind. I repeat that my present purpose is to instruct the candidate on minor points, that he may be spared the smaller corrections which occupy some of the time and pains which are better spent upon the weightier contents of theses submitted for the Acts for M.B. and M.D. degrees, and of other academic essays.

It is one of the duties of a University to give instruction, and much of its instruction may be tested by suitably devised exercises, even by some kinds of examination; but it is our higher

function to teach our students to think, and of this accomplishment the thesis or essay is the chief evidence. We are asked sometimes why at Cambridge we require a thesis for M.B., seeing that three out of four of these theses must be, comparatively speaking, immature. For this reason. During all his undergraduate time the student has been spoon-fed, and in his examinations he is apt to serve up rations of text-book at second hand; as Whittier says, "to turn the crank of an opinion mill." In working up a thesis he finds intellectual freedom, and after completing a piece of work of his own he goes into practice as a new man.

Thus it is that the Faculty of Medicine in Cambridge regards the theses as necessary parts of the exercises for degrees; their use being two-fold—to train the mind, and to show how far it has been trained. The theses for M.B. are on the whole remarkably good; some of them indeed reveal no inconsiderable power of thought and research: if at this stage however we are content with a fair measure of industry and intelligence, from the candidate for M.D. or D.Sc., for a Fellowship or Studentship, for one of the larger University prizes, or for the graduation of an "Advanced Student," more is expected; from such a candidate we expect some maturity of thought, some wealth of personal experience, something of the art of putting his thoughts; and indeed some originality. He must have made the subject his own; his treatment of it must bear the characters of

personal observation and reflection which raise an essay above the level of ordinary compilation, and the powers of handling ideas and principles which distinguish, or should distinguish, University training as contrasted with vocational or technical instruction. "A man," says Sir Thomas Browne, "should be something that all men are not, and individual in somewhat beside his proper name." If in such essays we find the cardinal qualities, we are lenient in respect of some slovenliness of arrangement, or some inaccuracy of language, unbecoming as such faults may be.

That we do not always succeed in teaching the student to think is but too evident in his bewilderment when he has *to find a subject for an essay*. Now, it is true that the proper choice of a subject, and of its title, is a difficult matter, one in which few candidates can be independent of the assistance of their elders; yet too often the student is bewildered, not in his choice of one among the infinite number of subjects calling for inquiry, but in his contentment with current formulas, in his lack of perception of the immaturity of our science, of the hollowness of much of our knowledge, and of the solidity of much of our ignorance. In every direction we travel but a very short way before we are brought to a stop; our eyes are opened to see that our path is beset with doubts, and that even our best-made knowledge comes but too soon to an end. In every chapter arises problem after problem to beckon us on to further investigation; yet this way and that we are so baffled by darkness and

ignorance that to choose one of these problems for attack, one which is likely to repay his labour, is often beyond the decision of a junior student, of a candidate for the degree of M.B. for example; and it is not easy for me to help him, as I may help a candidate for M.D. The subject for M.B. and other junior exercises must be comparatively simple, the materials easily accessible within his own range, and the research straightforward.

Usually I advise the M.B. candidate to consult a member of the staff of his hospital,¹ who will help him to some inquiry for which, in the current clinical or pathological work of the school, material happens to be at hand. I have gratefully to acknowledge the advice and guidance afforded to Cambridge students, in the preparation of their theses, by members of the staffs of large hospitals and laboratories elsewhere. For M.B. I accept subjects from any department of Medicine, including surgery and obstetrics; for M.D. topics technically surgical are proper rather for the M.C.

In the course of the last few months of his work for the final examinations, the M.B. candidate will do well to ponder over two or three subjects; so that, the examination passed, he may obtain approval of that one which seems most convenient, and set to work upon it without delay; thus in a few weeks his thesis may be completed. Now and then a candidate gets the subject approved and the

¹ The candidate will do well to procure the little book by Sir Humphry Rolleston, *On writing Theses for Medical Degrees* (Bale & Co., 1911).

work well forward before the final examination ; so that, if then successful, the Act may be kept forthwith. If the thesis be not ready, the degree of B.Ch., which is a 'double qualification,' can be taken, and registered, and the M.B. postponed till the Act can be kept.

For advanced students, such as the candidate for the Second Part of a Tripos, for a Fellowship, for the Doctorate in any Faculty, the undertaking is not so simple ; such persons must enter upon a larger research, and one less dependent upon ordinary advantages : indeed, if out of residence in or near a university, the candidate may have to make opportunities. Both in literature and science methods are becoming longer, stricter, and more complex ; unless other occupation can be set aside, a year's work may scarcely suffice for the completion of such a thesis. Hence it is of the more importance that the advanced student should be careful to select a fruitful subject, and to pursue it from the first on a right method.

In the case of M.D., a candidate who has entered into general practice, and who may have given such hostages to fortune that he must devote the best of his time to earning an income, the preparation of a thesis is not impossible ; but it is difficult. Half-hours he would willingly give to rest must be devoted to work ; methods of research, readily undertaken in a laboratory or clinical school, are now a heavy tax upon his ingenuity and his purse ; processes which need continuous attention can hardly be carried forward ; libraries may be far

away, apparatus costly or out of reach. Yet, in spite of such hardships, not a few candidates for M.D. emerge from general practice with theses which are but the more excellent for the self-denial and the high purpose which inspired them. We advise graduates who intend to enter general practice, and yet would merit the M.D. degree, to proceed towards these exercises as soon as the M.B. is attained—during, perhaps, the tenure of some hospital or laboratory appointment. We are ready to read theses and, in case of acceptance, to take the exercises for M.D. at any date after M.B. or M.A.; though of course the degree cannot be conferred till the statutory period is fulfilled. If however after qualification the candidate must enter upon general practice without delay, and yet would aim at the M.D., I advise him to make some notes, however brief, of every case; to supply himself with some instruments of precision, according to his tastes and aptitudes; and for a few years to content himself with gathering clinical, pathological, and other material, and keeping up his reading: thus in time a subject will shape itself in his mind. I heard it said lately of a very able physician in country practice that in his fatal cases for thirty years he had scarcely ever failed to obtain a necropsy.¹ It is sad to think that the wisdom of an observer so earnest as he must have been should have died with him; what a thesis he might have written!

¹ This achievement is credited to Ant. Benivieni of Florence (1440–1500), in whose day necropsies were rare events.

Twice or thrice we have received from physicians in country places a nosological survey of a certain district; the nature and incidence of disease being compared with the local peculiarities and variations of climate, soil, social habits, and the like. From the time of White of Selborne it has been the good custom of naturalists and antiquaries thus to examine the history and features of particular places; by combining the records of many such observers we might in time put together a medical survey of the kingdom.

Title of a Thesis.—From the title sent up for approval I may be able to form some notion of the composition which will follow. A concise and pointed title indicates similar virtues in the essay; a weak or diffuse title, a loose and vague argument. Or a title may be concise enough, yet not to the point; *e.g.* a candidate may offer ‘Three Cases of Pernicious Anæmia,’ a title that suggests no more than a report of the notes of the three cases; whereas the writer is probably aware that a mere collection of cases, in any number, without comparison and argument, is unacceptable. Many titles, again, which give the indications of the argument well enough, are wider than is necessary to denote the subject; or too abstract (p. 162); or too heavily loaded with technical terms. First impressions are strong impressions; a title ought therefore to be well studied, and to give, so far as its limits permit, a definite and concise indication of what is to come. Dr. Fielding Garrison, the eminent Surgeon-General’s Librarian at Washington,

and medical historian, has given good counsel on titles; see *Virg. Med.*, semi-monthly, June 25, 1909.

After the title the writer may contemplate some **definitions**: but he will do well, especially in biology, to distinguish between technical, verbal, or historical definitions and attempts to define natural kinds. Even in astronomy to define a constellation would be no easy matter; and, as the departments of science become more and more complex, definition is recognised as a scholastical task. Classes we must create artificially, for the convenience of thinking; of such classes we must give short descriptions, and the expression of them is an excellent training of thought: but we shall beware of taking short descriptions for definitions. On precision of thinking I cannot say too much, yet to pack samples of thought in hard shells is to bury thought alive. We must beware of taking provisional and convenient for radical distinctions.

Names and **terms** on the other hand cannot be too carefully defined, and fixed. In a certain dissertation for a degree the referee reported (among other things) that the candidate used the word 'acceleration' in half a dozen different senses. What should we think of a curator who allowed both others and himself to shuffle the labels in his museum? Yet we do this continually, and allow our pupils to do it. There is no more characteristic disease than Asthma, yet this title is often shuffled with cardiac and renal dyspnœa; no more characteristic disease than Epilepsy, yet under its name other convulsions, such as the Jacksonian, the

eclamptic, and so on, are often huddled. Again, to rely on such a name as 'neurosis' without definition is a common fault. The psychologists are sad dogs in this kind of vagueness and equivocation.

Form.—The subject chosen, facts must be collected, inferences formulated, and the whole presented with due proportion in its several parts, and in language as nervous and lucid as the author can command. But, as strength and general dexterity do not suffice to make a cricketer, so knowledge and mental power do not suffice to make a writer. No one feels vexed that he cannot dance, paint, or ride to hounds without practice; yet men are apt to murmur that it is but the mere knack of writing—a knack with which, according to them and to Dogberry, some fellows are endowed by nature,—that is wanting to make their learning and talents conspicuous in print. To those who have taken lifelong thought how to write, who have striven painfully with the craft of this supreme art, the view of it as a happy gift seems a flippancy. In critical jargon indeed the happiest word or phrase is called 'inevitable'; it becomes 'inevitable' when we have seen it, till then it is but too evitable. Let the candidate be assured that an easy and interesting style, like easy cricket, implies hard practice; the prose which in Swift, in Newman, in Froude, in Thackeray, runs so transparently that, to him whose eye is not set for it, the medium is unseen, comes of patience at least as enduring, and training as exquisite, as the more effulgent phrase of Sir

Thomas Browne, De Quincey, Carlyle, or Ruskin. No pieces are more 'spontaneous' than the Fables of La Fontaine, but the labour of correction and revision which he gave to them seems to us almost incredible (p. 28). Such simplicity comes of consummate technique (pp. 138, 178). Buffon, we are told, rewrote his prose twelve or fourteen times, and then would have it read to him, that he might note where the reader hesitated, and where the several stops should be placed (p. 178). To me, the most of whose work has been done away from the desk, composition is painful; to few men of affairs can it be much otherwise: yet the man of science ought best to know that style and matter can no more be dissociated than skin and bone; that if we write clumsily, loosely, or disjointedly our thoughts also are undisciplined. The sifting of language is the weighing of thought. In scientific prose words should be used as carefully as symbols in mathematics; there are few true synonyms in literature, none perhaps: words have not only their stem meanings, but carry upon them also many changes and tinctures of past uses which blend inevitably in our sentences. The word 'apostate,' for example, means for us far more than an absentee or a dissenter, and a muscle more than a little mouse; monks rarely live alone; your anecdote is anything but clandestine; rivals contend for other than water rights, and hypocrites are no longer confined to the theatre (p. 99). 'By *dint* of iteration' we may say, but in a paper before me 'by *dint* of carelessness and forgetfulness' indicates a careless and

forgetful writer. No accomplished writer forgets the traditions of words, nor the incidental connotations thus clinging to them; nor that it is due to these evanescent features that, large as the common elements of two words may be, no two are strictly synonymous. Mr. Bradley¹ says, "It is true that our language is a difficult instrument to use with full effect, on account of its richness in those seeming synonyms which ignorant or careless writers employ without discrimination; but in skilled hands it is capable of a degree of precision and energy which can be equalled in few languages, either ancient or modern." When thus we consider the "genius of a whole language," we shall comprehend that even if translation of a work from one tongue into another should issue in as fine or a finer work of art, the pair can never be even approximately identical. To translate *ῥητορεία*, *ineptus*, *humanitas*, or *Dichtung* seems impossible; to translate *città* into *city* is an illustrative blunder.² And, if this be true in a static sense, how much more is it true dynamically; for words move, and we are not sure in translation to catch them at the stage where the author found them. We have then to choose our words not only as we should choose symbols, or the parts of a diagram, but also as we should lay in tints for a picture, or blend quarries for a painted window. We shall be ashamed of the scanty vocabularies (p. 104) which seem to satisfy many essayists; and, not occupying ourselves with the

¹ *Making of English*, 1904, p. 110.

² See p. 143 and Appendix of words seeming to be latin.

flimsy wares of the railway bookstalls, but with the masterpieces of prose, of our own time and of all time, literary and scientific, we shall furnish our memories with a richer store of words and thoughts; and, by weighing and comparing them, educate our sense of their relative values.

In sketching the plan of a work, be it small or great, one of the first thoughts should be—For what readers is my treatise, paper, or pamphlet intended? This question we often fail to keep vividly before ourselves: we are apt to forget whom we are addressing; whether simple readers, learned readers, advanced students, a section of the public, or the general public. When full of his subject, an author may soar away from the apt and the convenient, and write so at large that the essay comes home to no one: for some it is too much, for others too little, for others useless or alien.

Every writer has his own **method of composing**; I will describe that which I have found to answer well enough. For each subject on which I may have to write, I set apart a labelled drawer, or a large quarto envelope, and into it I throw the proper cuttings, slips, and references to books or papers. It is better to copy extracts at the time of discovery than, when at work, to have to fetch them, it may be from a distant library. Unverified extracts and summaries, in Year-books and the like, must be accepted with caution; often they pervert the meaning, or are false to the context of the original essay (p. 167). My slips are of the size

of cheques, that is about eight inches by three ; two inches of one end are left blank. I never make two entries on one slip, nor write on both sides of any. If two or more are used for one entry they are pinned together. When I begin to write these slips may have accumulated for years ; the first work is then to parcel the subject into its several chapters, and to write the titles and numbers of these on similar slips of stouter paper. Next, having fixed a 'bulldog clip' upon each of these Capital slips, I distribute under them the slips proper to each. The blank ends of the slips pass under the clip, so that no writing is concealed ; thus secured the slips are as easily turned over as the leaves of a cheque-book. During this part of the work changes in the chapters, or in the number or order of them, often suggest themselves ; some need division, some are merged in others.

The next task is to arrange the slips within each clip in logical order, when many obsolete notes are destroyed, others blended and rewritten. In the next place I set down heads and subheads upon the left column of a sheet of foolscap folded down the middle (not 'down the *centre*' p. 127). These entries are shifted and reshifted till the order seems clear ; meanwhile are entered on the right-hand column, opposite to their proper subjects, forgotten and additional memoranda to be incorporated afterwards. This done, a hasty *first draft* of the article is made. I do not destroy each slip as it is used ; I draw a line across it and store it, lest it be

wanted for reference. Round three sides of the manuscript a wide margin is left.

The work may now be regarded as half done; I usually make four drafts before the manuscript goes to the printer. In the *second draft* I delete redundant words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs; by doing this rigorously, and pulling the rest together, from one-sixth to one-fifth of this manuscript, or even more of it, disappears. The late Bishop Boyd Carpenter told me that not infrequently in writing a sermon he recast the order and form of the argument even twenty times, renouncing, condensing, and rearranging. In the C minor symphony many passages, even those which seem most spontaneous, were rewritten from ten to twenty times. Many sentences are but repetitions; others are got rid of by the insertion of a minor clause, or of an adjective elsewhere; thus: "Other factors, such as rickets or tuberculosis, must be taken into account, as any one of these will have an adverse influence on the case." Here 'adverse' should be inserted before 'factors,' and the sentence ended at 'account.' Remember the defence of a prolix report: "I hadn't time to make it shorter." Let us not fear lest we be too brief; if the matter be meagre padding will not amend it. Certain senior candidates were directed to read, and then with closed book to write out, the well-known passage of Gulliver's capture of the fleet in Lilliput; the best candidate did not get nearer than twice the number of words.

Transfers also are made now; sentences and

paragraphs which would stand better elsewhere are removed. Again, excogitate matter and argument as we may before beginning to write, yet, as we write, thought develops, and may develop considerably; thus the later part of the first draft may proceed on larger lines, and be fuller in thought than the earlier part. In the later draft therefore the writer may have to consider the earlier in the light of the later part, and to remodel it. This is the toughest of the tasks of revision, for it may be necessary to break up and reconstruct the piece. As the first reading proceeds a rough index is easily jotted down, and is very convenient in detection of repetitions, and in making later insertions and corrections.

On the *third draft* the composition is submitted to a still closer revision; but the main work of this stage is to recast the several paragraphs and sentences till they run logically, and bear but one meaning, and this inevitably: perverse constructions and equivocal or defective words give way to their betters. Ornamental and figurative passages also undergo purgation: in scientific papers this purgation should often go to expurgation; yet our writing should be lively as well as true, and some happy allusions, if distilled to their essence, may be carried in upon an adjective, or upon a noun coloured by an apt association. An author should form the habit of setting down no word, not even the definite article, without weighing, less and less consciously as his habit grows, its primary meaning, its derivative meanings, and its colour in the

particular context. From instant to instant he will turn each word over as shrewdly as a thrush turns a pebble. An intelligent friend of mine once exclaimed, "You don't mean to say one has to think on every word before one puts it down?" Certainly; but by habit these past appreciations become automatic, as does swift judgment in a game, or in the dance of a lacemaker's bobbins. When a distinguished physician alarmed us the other day by saying without qualification that "The number of the infectious diseases is by no means complete," he had not formed this habit; for probably he meant our discrimination of such as we have. If the writer has endeavoured to enrich his vocabulary (pp. 11, 104), he will find that by the wider choice of words he will gain in truth as well as in liveliness; his expressions will become more and more apt; he will know, for instance, when to say 'begin,' when to say 'commence'; when to say 'theory,' when to say 'opinion,' 'notion,' 'conjecture,' or 'guess.' "*ἡ γὰρ τῶν λόγων κρίσις πολλῆς ἐστι πείρας τελευταῖον ἐπιγένημα.*"¹ "Words," says Francis Bacon, "like a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment."

A sentence may be stuffed, like a bag, with valuable matter; yet unless the clauses run in the order of the thought, and by still subtler arrangement emphasise its main points and positions, the reader's attention will flag. Not only the

¹ For the discernment of words is the last fruit of a long discipline.

clauses then but the words also must be placed exactly (p. 92); for emphasis, like a 'call' at whist, may be given by slight transpositions, even of single words (p. 153). Too many writers, by ignoring the order of words and clauses, obscure their own meanings, blunt our insight into thought, and make for listlessness in both writer and reader.

At this stage diagrams and other illustrations are inserted or attached; and I would urge that no convenient opportunity of introducing such aids to the reader be overlooked. A plan or sketch is often more effectual than a verbal description, or indeed may take the place of it.

Not infrequently in the *fourth draft* of the essay such rehandling will suggest itself that another and yet another copy may have to be made for the printer. Bryce told us that Green made ten drafts of the first chapter of *The Making of England*; Green who, of full and accurate writers, was one of the swiftest whose methods are known to us.

Before the *final revision* let some considerable time intervene—say a week or two at least, in order that meanwhile the mind may meditate subconsciously on the subject, and that the final reading be done with refreshed attention; it is surprising with what new critical and constructive interest one comes again to a subject, and to a manuscript, which for a short time have been laid aside. Moreover, for a critical re-perusal, provide for some leisure, so as to read not by bits, but over a good stretch of the manuscript at once, and to attain a survey of its scope and bearings. Never

compose when tired, nor in the false confidence of tea and late hours. At such seasons the composition seems to be spontaneous and beautiful, but too often it is fairy gold and in the colder light of the morning turns to ashes.

Selection is an essential function, not for creative art only, but also, in no very minor degrees, for technical and scientific conceptions; as necessary as *proportion* and *consistency*, of which indeed it is a condition. Even in the inductive method selection plays a much larger part than the stricter Baconians admit; induction is not an inventory but an invention, and if it be an intellectual it is also an imaginative function. What pathos lies about those shapeless piles of materials, those Titanic yet unconsummated labours which, for lack of selection and balance of parts, never got fashioned into comprehensible works! In our own profession, as in other callings, even in a single consultation we may see how great in some men is the labour, how capacious the memory, how conscientious the devotion which may compass the failure of a diagnosis made truly and quickly by the more selecting eye of—it may be—a far less industrious physician.

Nature only can present the sum total of phenomena; man must create his microcosms in a spirit of renunciation. To this selection then, supreme as it is, we must all make some pretension, each of us in his own way. On the first contemplation of a subject it is impossible to select the vital from the ineffectual lines and lights; the apprehension of the whole is still vague; and for a time we

must be content to conceive it vaguely, wandering, as it were, from one point of view to another. Gradually however certain features come forward, and these we shall try to hold with a "photographic eye." Phil May once told Frank Lockwood and myself that he learnt to draw by filling his sketches with detail, and then deleting it line by line till the vital lines stood out. After letting attention slip for a while, we shall inquire of ourselves—and this is the most important element of the process—why this and that feature become vivid, why some of them lead in the general impression, and most truly reveal the lines of life? By some mystic change the characteristic features of the subject rearrange themselves in our minds; many details vanish, others combine into new shapes (by "unconscious cerebration" as the phrase goes), and a clearer image or conception holds the field. Then, and not till then, is the time to write.

The Logic of an Essay.—Locke said of logic that one could not apply the syllogism until the truth was ascertained, and that then one did not want it. In science logical has given way to historical order. Speaking generally, it is better to compose a scientific essay, and to construct its limbs, not on the inductive plan on which the research was pursued, but deductively. In investigation we begin by catching our facts; then we make short inferences, and test them by more facts; these inferences widen and widen, and in their turns are tested, and so on; such by reason and by growth is the course of research: but as demonstration

this method is not telling; the student is held too long in suspense (*vide* p. 85). A correspondent sent me this counsel of Sir William Jenner (On Fevers): "*First state your general conclusions, then give your cases, and your reader will be able to carry along with him the clue,*" etc. The following sentence may serve briefly to illustrate this advice: "The Presbyterians threw their freedom down without casting one glance on the past at the feet of the most heartless tyrant." This is the order in which the thought probably arose in the excogitation. But we shall see how much better it is to alter this order, and to make a new synthesis. We may begin by setting forth certain more general views, and from these proceed to closer and closer quarters with the particulars on which our position is to be established. Logic does not make matter, it arranges matter already gathered. We had done better to retain Epicurus' word 'Canonic' instead of 'Logic'; for, clear our minds as we may, *logos* does no doubt suggest the essence of things; but 'Canonic' suggests no more than rules of thought. Logic has always sought to "go into the merits" wherein it has no business. *La logique mène aux abîmes.*

Not even in language is logic all, or nearly all. Like good manners, language owes not its charm only but also its force and penetration to incalculable, imponderable, elements. The line of the driest argument overflows logic in all directions, reason turns and doubles on itself; were it possible to photograph it in a flash, its course would appear

not as a straight line, but as one of curves and zigzags ; thus as it goes it falls under changing lights, and intimate metaphors creep in unbidden. Moreover, an author cannot but be aware of his audience ; he receives its influence into his fancy, and betrays his wariness by glances and stage asides. Maitland was a master in this art. In the following sentence, plain as it is, we may note prospects opened and passed in flashes, quick doubles, and glints striking hither and thither. Note the telling aside to the reader in the one ironical word ‘usurping’ :

“A lay-papist will first consider his abbey-lands ; . . . if zeal get the better of the law . . . his new humble confessor may be raised to a bishoprick, and from thence look down superciliously upon his patron, or which is worse, run to take possession for God Almighty of his abbey, in such manner as the usurping landlord shall hardly be admitted to be so much as a tenant to his own lands.”

Again, in its tones and rhythms language plays upon us as the instrument of a musician (p. 170) ; beyond its melodies and its scores, it is attuned to us in an infinite sphere of ‘wireless’ vibrations, born partly of its own fibre, partly of the fibre of the master ; these harmonies obey no formal call, and defy all reckonings.

Whether then we decide to arrange our matter inductively or deductively, the place of logic, or ‘canonic,’ is to see that the order and development of thought are duly followed from step to step. As human minds are substantially akin, if the writer observes the best order of his own thought,

the reader will take his line quickly and, for assent or dissent, perceive his drift.

Summaries.—On the completion of a long thesis, or important scientific essay, it is well to draw up a *syllabus of the argument* and to place it at the beginning; in any case let the conclusions be set out succinctly at the end: it is not for the author to compel the reader to peruse his essay. But for your summary do not fetch the alien word ‘résumé’; still less ‘summarisation.’

For students whose essays occupy the field of letters an interesting discourse might be written on *the beginnings and ends of books and essays*. Of ends, authors of theses and others seem to be too careless; yet how telling a place is the end of a paper for a weighty reflection, or a view of the field. All writers, even the least skilful, are, in the degree of their skill, at some care how to begin. An unpractised writer, for sheer helplessness at the outset, may never begin; he may abandon his work in despair. A witty beginning is something of a liberty; for an emphatic beginning the reader is not yet attuned; nor is he attuned to a ponderous introduction. To begin naturally and interestingly is no mean art. “I was ever of opinion that the honest man who married and brought up a large family did more service than he who continued single and only talked of population.” Thus begins *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and what could be happier? The opening sentence touches the heart of the story; it is sententious, but its sentiment is instantly

lightened by a ray of humour. Again: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world I lighted on a certain place where was a Denn; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a Dream." Here again the heart of the story is touched; and by the wilderness and the dream we are carried at once into the realm of the imagination. The opening chapter of *The Antiquary* is well known, I trust, to every one. Miss Austen's stories all open well; e.g. "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine"; and so on. "Venice's position among the States of Italy" etc., if a significant, is an inelegant beginning. If from romantic instances we turn to scientific works we shall find in the best of them this art of beginning happily. The *Essay on Human Understanding* enters thus with distinction: "Since it is the understanding that sets man above the rest of sensible beings, and gives him all the advantage and dominion which he has over them, it is certainly a subject, even for its nobleness, worth our labour to inquire into." The *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* commences with a short but pregnant sentence: "In the second century of the Christian Aera, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilised portion of mankind." Herschel begins the *Preliminary Discourse* with like propriety, if not with like distinction of phrase: "The situation of man on the globe he inhabits, and over

which he has obtained the control, is in many respects exceedingly remarkable."

To turn from books to essays: Macaulay does not begin admirably; he opens mouth like a watch-dog. Matthew Arnold is happier, as in the well-known opening of his essay on Keats: "Poetry, according to Milton's famous saying, should be 'simple, sensuous, impassioned.' No one can question the eminency in Keats's poetry of the quality of sensuousness." Here, in spite of the three *y*'s, a fitting and lofty note is struck at the outset. Or, opening by chance a volume of his *Causeuses*, I may translate the first sentence of Sainte-Beuve's essay on Jouffroy: "There is a generation which, born quite at the end of the last century, still in its infancy or immaturity under the Empire, came of age, and put on the robe of manhood in the midst of the storms of 1814 and 1815." A fine opening, by contrast, to a study of that placid and limpid mind. Bacon's essays open well, some magnificently.

But I may not multiply examples; these will suggest to us how to open a subject aptly, intimately, and also with dignity or vivacity. We shall not begin with a crude or heavy lump of our matter, yet we shall try to touch the keynote of the subject, and to engage in the argument easily but directly. We have seen that the 'beginnings' of great writers are direct; they do not begin with apologies, with wayward or fanciful approaches, nor with any kind of skirmishing. After these great examples, we also shall try to

begin with some glimpse into the heart of the matter, to put the reader at our point of view, and then to lead him briskly forward. Hence the beginning may not be written until we have so cast our argument that we can perceive the point whence the best view of its purport is to be had. We may encourage those essayists who may fall so shy of the beginning as never to enter upon their work at all, by assuring them that it is not necessary to begin their essay till they have brought it to an end.

Of *endings* I will only say, "Do not end anyhow"; let your leave-taking be easy, gracious, and impressive in proportion to the theme; not ponderous, pompous, epigrammatic, or austere. From a fine writer, one from whose works I might cull many admirable instances, I will venture to quote the end of a book: "And this age of ours, if, like its predecessors, it can boast of something of which it is proud, would, could it read the future, doubtless find also much of which it would be ashamed." A true, but rather unkind farewell! A charming essay by another hand ends with the reflection that the 'argument in which we have been engaged is not addressed to all men' . . . but, in short, to the initiated reader. This is too fastidious a farewell; querulous perhaps. After turning over a few scientific books I will translate the conclusion of Daremberg's *History of the Medical Sciences*:

"That which to-day makes the strength of the medical sciences, which assures their future destiny, is, if we reflect

upon tradition and history, that all savants worthy of the name, from one end of the civilised world to the other, putting aside the rivalries of system, and shaking the dominion of routine authority whencesoever it may derive, seek each other and meet on the common ground of observation, experiment, and freedom of thought."

For literary essayists the end of Mackail's *Latin Literature* may serve as an example :

"In the stately structure of that imperial language they embodied those qualities which make the Roman name most abidingly great — honour, temperate wisdom, humanity, courtesy, magnanimity ; and the civilised world still returns to that fountainhead, and finds a second mother-tongue in the speech of Cicero and Virgil."

After the first publication of this book Mr. E. V. Lucas (*Speaker*, Jan. 20, 1905) offered this as a perfect final sentence (on William the Silent): "As long as he lived he was the guiding star of a whole nation, and when he died the little children cried in the streets." And let me contribute the end of Colet's *Accidence* ; surely, in its quaint way, one of the most touching farewells in literature :

"Wherefore I praye you, al lytel babys, al lytel chyldren, lerne gladly. . . . Trustyng of this begynnyng that ye shal procede and growe to parfyte lyterature, and come at the last to be grete clarkes. And lyfte up your lytel whyte handes for me, whiche prayeth for you to God : to whom be all honour and glory. . . . Amen" (*Lupton's Life*, p. 177).

These are notable examples ; ordinary papers and short treatises must end in modest proportion to their contents.

References.—After the summary of conclusions append a sufficient list of the books and papers

consulted during the research. Those which the author has personally consulted in the original, howsoever he were directed thither, he may enter as his own references; when he has not been himself to the source, he must enter and duly attribute the reference as a quotation. The writer who learns to verify his references will learn meanwhile the curious lesson that in the same words, or context, various readers see various meanings; a confusion due, in some part no doubt, to ambiguities of expression. Some authors, whose accuracy is not in question, give exactly the title of a periodical, the volume, the part, and the page, but not the year; often a vexatious omission. Lists of references should be made on a uniform plan.

Dictation.—Many authors dictate their matter to a shorthand writer, who makes a fair copy for the author's revision. Personally I find this method very defective; and I fancy I note its defects in the prose of other authors. It saves much trouble, of this there is no doubt; and for temporary purposes, especially for addresses to be spoken, it is convenient or even proper. But the language of literature, both in scope and variety, is different from that of conversation. Besides, one may be seeking a happy word, or phrase, or order, for an hour or two; what about the typewriter's patience? We do not always realise how prattling a discourse may appear on the printed page which in conversation or public speech was telling enough; but to write

prattle, save for some light and ephemeral purpose, is as inept as to talk like a book. If the reader conceives that the felicitous narrative, or gossipy prose, of Sterne, Walpole, Elia, or Thackeray is but written talk, let him read a page or two, close the book, and try to reproduce it. In such prose the impression of unstudied ease is a product of the finest pains, of pains unknown to those who are prepared with the stuff but not with the art of letters (p. 10).

Anyhow will do!—But the ‘practical man’ will say that these are trivial or ingenious inventions; why all this torment of form if in any shape he can shovel the stuff he has to dispose of into the reader’s head? Well, in the first place a writer who writes to convince, must learn to lay his mind alongside that of the reader, who must be carried along in a quick and equable current. It vexes him to have to return upon sentence after sentence in order to revise the author’s particular meanings by the general tenor of his argument; yet in reading current prose this vexation is so continual that we scarcely realise how great is the burden and tax of it. An author complained that an editorial emendation had altered his meaning; the editor retorted “whose fault was that?” Are we to suppose the author’s meaning beforehand? The sentence, as it stands, bears a certain meaning; the author retorts testily, “Oh, you know I did not mean that”: but he has written it; and it is not fair for an author to think in the rough, to scribble unchastened whatsoever comes into his

head, so that, as Erasmus said, "Apollo only could discern his meaning," and thus to throw the control and revision upon the vigilance of the reader. Let us cherish a sense of duty to our meaning. Here are some bad examples: "Infant mortality is very great, there being no possible substitute in cases of necessity for natural feeding," which words say that when natural feeding is necessary there is no substitute for infant mortality. Or again: 'It is our duty not to give hasty judgments till we have all the facts before us' (and then may we?). 'He abjured the errors of Protestantism to embrace those of Catholicism' (is this sarcasm or muddle?). 'This teaching, if much longer denied, threatens to be attended with disastrous results.' 'The radiation depends upon the nature of the body and a closed screen to the sky which holds the heat.' 'He complained of the information which was being kept from him.' 'This report contains some omissions.' A really able candidate wrote the other day "but its absence is no proof that it is not present." 'Intemperance *predisposed to*, and *probably caused* this disease.' 'A child who has been in a cretinous condition for years will not improve to such an extent as one who has been detected early' (as if mere detecting him would do him any good)! In few theses, though of plain matter enough, have we not to prop up maimed or rickety conceptions, to dissect conventional phrases or equivocal words—like 'inheritance' for instance—and to sweep aside page after page of loose vesture which

nowhere fits the thought closely, nor moves freely with it. A thinker grappling with deep thoughts may write a burdened or too obscurely allusive style, especially if his subject matter be complex and recondite, but surely nothing so foggy as this from an eminent author: "Eschatology naturally interests a region essentially connected with a theory of the conflict of good and evil powers."

Indeed a thought or idea (in prose) can be perfectly expressed in one way only.

In nature there is no great and small. Porphyry, in his letter to Marcella, says, "It is better for thee to cast a stone at random than a word." And the careful *precision*, even of a word, often so bites into the matter as to drive the author himself to revise or enlarge his thought; slovenly writing is not only for the most part slovenly thinking, but slovenly habits of expression corrode the very substance of thought. Professor Glover has said well, "The man who gives forth habitually what is immature falls into a habit of miscarriage." An eminent classical master wrote the other day: "Such a largely empiric science as educational theory," etc. This is slovenly language because the thinking is slovenly. John Hunter, an illiterate genius clutching inarticulately at the evasive shadows of truth, commands our labour and our time; but are we to be delayed and tormented by the formless, halting, and tortuous essays of any laboratory worker, not oppressed by a transcendent range of insight, nor by the remote or rugged nature of his matter, but content to abide in sheer

illiteracy, disorderliness, or shallowness? Yet M. Arnold said, "Sincerity is itself akin to character, and to high and severe work." If, through dimness of expression, the mind of the reader be led to peer into new, if vague, apprehensions, we are enticed to read the riddle—*veritatis tanquam umbram consecramur*; but an obscurity which begins and ends in confusion wearies us. We find relief in authors who are lucid so far as they go, and ignore all beyond the comprehensible; yet we should endeavour to be lucid within the comprehensible while writing under a sense of the incomprehensible. The seat among the immortals of letters prepared for Tennyson may, for its ungainliness and its antics, be denied to the more vivid and penetrating muse of Browning. Hunter himself felt as deeply as any of his disciples how heavy was the burden of his illiteracy, a burden indeed which has prevented the full recognition of his genius by posterity.

On the other hand, we shall beware of a merely specious lucidity: Cicero did not say, as he is often quoted, "Omne quod dilucide dicitur praeclare mihi dici videtur," but "Omne quod *de re bona* dilucide," etc. I wish I dare name some conspicuous authors who have vogue in our day chiefly by virtue of a plausible style; for them I use the word 'style' gladly; or shall we say stylistic facility. Their pomp is not that of Gibbon, their complexity is not that of Acton, their sententiousness is not that of Thucydides or Tacitus. Lady Welby reminded us that "if new interests and new comprehensions

enter into our work there must be effort; the pre-visional thinker must be obscure at first to him whose mind is bounded by past and present"; but at any rate let there be no ambiguity up to the place of taking off into the "noble dimness": by repeated and instructed effort we may learn to set forth even new things, if not with fulness of comprehension, yet with truth of scope and direction.

Temperance, order, lucidity are not creative virtues it is true; but they are precious conditions of creation.

Not a few intelligent authors come to a standstill in their mental life because they do not train themselves to model and balance and clarify their ideas, their chapters, their sentences and their words, nor try to *see* what they are setting forth: they have not been in the habit of asking themselves how sentence is related to sentence, and paragraph to paragraph, each modifying the other, and yet each in due proportion and subordination to the main purpose. Few writers set themselves the questions: Have I for myself thought all this out clearly, both in mass and in detail and in my mind's eye do I now *see it* (p. 187); or am I content "to thump out my meaning"; or to echo common notions, and pay out makeshift phrases? "He was nothing but a notionist," said George Fox, "he was not in possession of what he was talking about." Have I then put my sentences so that the most careless or captious reader cannot nail them down to any meaning other than that which, whether rightly or wrongly, I intended and con-

ceived? Have I done my reader the honour to suppose him capable of sustained thought; or have I written after the manner of the scrappy journalists who cater for the omnibus? Slatternly writing may well be compared with careless and superficial laboratory methods, inaccurate references and controls, and imperfect notes of processes. Thus useful or even prophetic ideas may come to nothing. It is strange that scientific men, who habitually work in dimensions of a ten-thousandth of an inch, are either blind to confusions of argument, and false refractions of meaning, or regard them with indifference. And these writers do not compensate us by the delightful effrontery of Toinette's "*Je suis l'inexactitude même*," or Leigh Hunt's "*I am not naturally a teller of truth.*"

By disorderly and hazy writing then we fall into worse things than muddle: we blunt the probity of our minds; we slur over difficulties and cover up ignorances. Content to be bunglers, we lose our respect for truth, and blunt our scientific consciences. On the other hand, when in an author's prose we perceive unobtrusive scruples, and feel that his conscience is tender for the rightness of things, we are disposed to give him credit in greater issues for the rectitude which he exhibits in the less.

Is it then for sheer incompetence that authors are thus apt to write what they do not mean; to lose sight of the difference between purpose and purport? Not altogether; we are apt no doubt to be too readily satisfied with a foggy context, but we

are apt also to qualify our words to ourselves by our private mental habits, bias and prepossessions; by elements, many of them indeed true and proper enough, of which we think casually but do not bring explicitly into view. Mother-wit is not to be disdained; but, to quote Lady Welby again:¹ "We have lost much mother-sense without gaining, as yet, its equivalent in the national plane." Spontaneity is good; but the art of writing is to be deliberate while seeming spontaneous (pp. 10, 28). How is the reader to pick up the author's clues, to interpret a context by his idiosyncrasy, to fill up an argument with his latent provisions? The reader has to accept, and ought to accept only, what is expressed, and to import no more; or the argument will be adulterated by yet another batch of elusive apprehensions, idiosyncrasies, and prepossessions.

I have said that the author who does not try to make his meaning clear and unequivocal will suffer in neglect for his carelessness. A friend asked me why his really good work is neglected? I know, but I cannot tell him; it is because he writes so ill that other, often less able, authors who respect their reader, get the credit. In a recent review of a very important book by a very important person I read as follows:—"Nevertheless there is such inextricable jumble of etiology, pathology, symptoms, treatment and prognosis, that it would be quite impossible for a reader to obtain information on a particular point without perusal of the

¹ Private letter to the author.

whole section. . . . Professor X. has undoubted powers and a high reputation . . . but as a writer of books his want of method and system clearly condemns him." And serve him right: others will get the credit. Take pains, therefore; with yourself first, then with your reader.

Formalism.—Persons of taste and scholarship are heard to say that to cherish the language, to be jealous of its privileges, to ordain its decrees, to husband its wealth, and to look askance at its ephemeral accretions, is to substitute a mechanical for a natural growth, and to bring about not development but formalism and stagnation. We must remember however that, if wild growth be good for young organisms, in maturity exuberance must give way to a more deliberately chastened and discriminating economy. In the child untamed expansion, or even extravagance, may be wholesome or winsome; in the discipline of the adolescent some taking of thought, some austerity of rule, must enter consciously into our methods. Those who think that to write anyhow is to leave language free for spontaneous growth, are forgetful of the truth that conscious processes of development must enter into the advance of a mature language, as they enter into the growth of mature nations and persons. The phase of 'absent-minded beggar'-dom is not a phase of maturity, and to continue in this state is to carry the child into manhood. To foster development on conscious lines needs, among other things, the 'historical sense,' whereby we discern the changes which lie in

the lines of growth from those which are features of degeneration or of reversion. For example, if in any nation ethics be in a welter, whether it be the chaos of development, or of corruption, we shall perceive largely, mainly perhaps, by the historical sense. In the *Speaker* of August 1904 Mr. Robert Bridges said he would not consent to argue with one who said, or implied, that all corruption in language is natural, and therefore desirable and unpreventible; some corruptions are of the nature of disease, indefensibly bad and to some extent preventible. So with language; at our age we must open our eyes to discern the strife of fruitfulness from the confusion of decay.

Indifferently to let our language shuffle along as it may is not always to draw new and racy elements from the children of nature; often it is to abandon it to a curious populace craving for coarse stimulants and factitious vehemence; elements that make not for development but for extravagance and exhaustion; not for directness, simplicity, and touch with nature but for meretriciousness and sophistry. But to the subject of new words and slang I shall return presently (p. 42).

What are, then, *the marks of growth or of decay*, of deterioration or of enrichment, of living and normal, as contrasted with morbid changes? Do we see the marks of the one or of the other in our own language? Do good and fertile words suffer rust or degradation, grow empty of significance or sterile? This is too large an inquiry for this

place, but some part of it we must consider. One of the well-recognised features of development is differentiation, the elaboration of several parts for specific ends; as, on the other hand, a blurring of specific quality and a confusion of parts in a common function are marks of rudiment, or retrogression. Now, in language can we note such tendencies, and if so whither do they tend? If we find that in a love of excess, or of coarse stimulants, the biggest word to be had is to be used for ordinary, or not very extraordinary, occasions; and if thus many words which had gained finer shades of meaning are worn down again into indifference; if, for instance, every mishap is a 'disaster,' every guess or opinion a 'theory'; if I write cursorily to a friend that I am 'anxious' to see him, or that his letter was 'immensely appreciated'; is it progress or deterioration? If in english there are few synonyms or none (p. 10), if between every pair of approximate words there is a difference, the variety of the words signifies a higher development and richer resources; the more the reversion of words once differentiated the deeper is the backsliding towards mean or rudimentary phases. But to gain, keep, and distribute a wealth of differentiated parts are largely matters of tact and vigilance; that is, of literary culture and discernment: and the no less certain defects of these qualities, the dangers of finicking and preciosity, or of over-sophistical wit, are not to deter us from thoughtful appreciations. Pedantry signifies not precision and nicety but a defective sense of

relative values, and a stationary if acquisitive mind. Such apparently was the mind of the don who, in the midst of the admirers of an eloquent sermon in St. Mary's, could only remark that the preacher had used the adjective 'adequate' inactively; that is, without 'to' something. Precision and nicety then should not be against simplicity but for it, for the shortest way and the least expenditure. Finicking and preciosity, on the other hand, are an otiose fashion of saying common things in uncommon ways:—*e.g.* the dirt of the purlieu 'brought a scum to the eyes and a tetter to the houses';—whereas, as Canon Ainger said, the mark of a great writer is to say uncommon things in common ways; as when Constance says, "To me and to the state of my great grief, let kings assemble."

A manly stile, fitted to manly eares
Best 'grees with wit; not that which goes so gay,
And commonly the gawdy liv'ry weares
Of nice corruptions, which the times do sway.

Speaking generally, the greater the mere dexterity, the more obviously cunning the ornament, the lower the art. A great critic has said, "Tous les grands artistes ont renoncé aux effets." So Mr. Woodward says well, "A self-conscious style was to Erasmus, as to Vittorino, the mark of a second-rate thinker"; but some allowance must be made for the period, as on the rediscovery of Cicero. "Geniuses are never impeccable, they leave perfection to a Gautier or a Banville." In the literary artist the thinker may wane; a peril

which perhaps Tennyson did not altogether escape. A broad and summary handling, if as unerring as in the later works of the greatest artists, of Rembrandt for example, of Hals, Velasquez, or Turner, is incomparably finer than niggling; yet this breadth is not attained by spurious ease or vaunting brush: a study of the earlier work of such great masters of light and form will reveal the indefatigable choice of vital accent through which this breadth was painfully won (p. 28). It is not by over-curious trimming then that force and precision are attained, but by masterful selection from the store of many harvests.

Gaudiness.—Young authors are prone to eccentricity and finery of style; “like Indians,” says Sir Philip Sidney, “who are not content to wear earrings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their noses and lips because they will be sure to be fine.” An unchastened love for letters, not unwelcome in the young, is readily caught by uncommon words and phrases, by language finer than the thought, as a girl is attracted by gauds; so it is that in the essays of young authors we note violent metaphors, dashing phrases, archaisms, odd spellings, slang, split infinitives, and such tinsel; and the clever young men turn upon us with the exclamation—Why should I not set these gems, old or new, into my writing if I think them effective? Because, young man, you may not paint and patch your mother’s cheeks. Dauber as you are; go down on your knees before your noble inheritance—the noblest speech that the

world has seen : when you have known its loveliness, when your ears have opened to its melodies, when you have counted but a little of its riches, you will shudder as at the thought of retouching a masterpiece. It is true that language is a living thing, that if it congeal it will die ; but before you are to take in hand to enrich the rich, or to paint the lily, you must reckon its wealth, and feel its magic of form and harmony. Then you may, but you will not, write of ‘going without saying’ (for ‘speaks for itself’), ‘leaping at the eyes,’ ‘giving furiously to think,’ ‘playing rôles,’ ‘giving on the street,’ bringing a matter ‘sur le tapis’ (or, still worse, ‘on the carpet’), and the rest of it : tricks which are as ungainly as they are profane. The inlay of a foreign or affected word or phrase is not to be justified by saying that it is good french, german, or latin. At a fancy ball one may dress in a foreign or eccentric costume, but in Pall Mall to wear a black cock’s plume in a silk hat would look merely odd. In the words of Boyle : “It is not the use but the affectation of exotic terms which is unworthy of a philosopher.”

Some persons affect oddity as a pretence of liberty or character. Character it may suggest, but let the actor be sure that the character is worth suggesting ; even Sterne did not make all his oddities lovely. In respect of liberty indeed the bargain is often a bad one ; to emerge from the cover of convention is to attract the public eye, and then the performance must be passable. In prose, as in dress and in manners, there are conven-

tions. To dress in peach-blossom may be well, and to write in peach-blossom may be well when the meaning is rare; but much good prose has to travel over the plains, and plain things are best dressed in a plain way. Not even the talent of Mr. Pater succeeded in making the peach-blossom style generally delightful. Fine or big words, or an unusual order should be held in reserve for moments of emphasis (p. 153); to reach on tiptoe for every word and so to make paragraphs all emphasis, is very fatiguing. Happily, as Mr. Herbert Paul says, some easy things are right.

If we turn to technical language, this sentence, 'Multiradial apocentricities lie at the root of many of the phenomena that have been grouped under the designation of Convergence,' was quoted in *Nature* with the just comment that the first clause, strained as it is, merely repeats the idea of the second in a more pretentious form. This sentence is as bad or worse: 'The process of parakeratosis is an irregular cornification.' Even learned writers are apt to suppose that restatement in bigger words is explanation.

Not that we would be purists in language; too often it is the cultured people who arrest its growth. Literary men may protest for traditional forms which, with no real advantage, stand in the way of rapidity and ease. Are we not better with 'surgery' than we should have been with chirurgery? I would not altogether resent the invasion even of *slang*; at worst it saves us from the too abstract (p. 162). Some slang words make their way generation by generation into our tongue, and increase its

wealth; but we shall not pounce upon a new word until we are satisfied that no word better, or as good, exists in the language; for generally the lack lies not in the language but in the vocabulary of the innovator. However, a few generations ago 'mob,' 'sham,' 'banter' were slang; and 'bus' perhaps still is? 'Crest-fallen' in the days of cock-fighters was slang; and now we meet 'handicap' far away from the racecourse. 'Discard' and 'pell-mell,' which had also a sporting origin, have been good english for three centuries; and from cards 'to go one better' is now coming in. The word 'fad' and its congeners are useful novelties, because 'crotchet,' 'craze,' or 'hobby' scarcely include the same meaning. 'Up to you' and 'on his own' are quick and effective phrases and may creep into good idiom. 'Bluff' now moves in the highest circles — 'c'était tout simplement du bluff dynastique'; and so do 'prig,' 'gab,' 'fake,' 'stodgy,' etc. 'Fluke' is certainly a gain to us, and I see (*New English Dictionary*) that now it has good authority. 'Byke' is no 'uglier' to me than 'like' or 'strike,' nor more uncouth than 'squad' or 'mob'; a new word was wanted for a new thing, and the *k* sound is not only the original sound but also spares us an increase of the excessive hisses of the English tongue. To 'wire' is surely a more convenient word than to 'telegraph.' 'Scientist' seems to me as proper as 'artist' or 'naturalist,' and better than 'orientalist,' but it should signify the professional worker; hardly the great amateur, such as Boyle or Darwin. To 'shunt' is not quite represented by any older verb; to

'boycott' we could ill spare, and to 'heckle' is indispensable. To 'endorse,' to 'discount,' and to 'take stock,' although they come of the children of Mammon, are serviceable. I see no more objection to 'Bartlemy's,' or even to 'Bart's,' than I do to 'Bedlam' or 'Maudlin.' 'Employee,' when the accent is dropped, will be as good english as 'trustee' or 'committee.' It will be seen that these recruits are all plain words for plain things; we must be more jealous of the invasion of phrases from technical or other cliques which do not appeal to common interests and understandings. As Paul Stapfer said,¹ "Le barbarisme est la bête noire; bien qu'il fasse plus de peur que de mal, étant en somme un assez bon diable, tantôt inoffensive, tantôt intéressant par son audace même et utile comme une condition du progrès."

Slang or exotic phrase, then, is mischievous when it is the jargon of a clique, or leads to the neglect or degradation of something richer or choicer. For instance; 'rôle' is inferior to 'part,' for 'rôle' takes us back to a dried sheepskin,² whereas to play a part is to be engaged in the drama itself: 'part' is a *ῥῆμα πράγματος*. 'Summary' is better than 'résumé' with its italics and alien accents; 'dernier ressort' is a legal phrase and means '*without appeal*,' but is taken to mean the last resource, or resort. 'Raison d'être,' 'tout ensemble,' 'cortège,' 'par excellence,' etc., etc., give us nothing that we have

¹ *Le Temps*, Sept. 10, 1905.

² I find I must explain that in former days actors' parts were written on parchment rolls.

not of our own. Such intrusions break the flow of the lines and carry with them a different charge of associations. 'Taboo' is generally used incorrectly, and in this common use is no better than 'ban.' There is no virtue in the barbarous 'cavitation' which is not in the civiller word 'excavation.' To 'exteriorise' is no better than 'utter'; nor 'centrifugalisation' than 'spinning.' 'To commence' is proper for formal uses; but to say 'I had just commenced my breakfast' is ridiculous; or 'the tremor commenced to cease,' which is worse. 'Standardisation' is a grievous burden, let it serve as a warning! 'Plucky' is a meaner word than 'bold,' 'daring,' 'courageous,' or 'staunch'; and is hardly necessary. Hospital, laboratory, and military slang must be regarded with particular suspicion; such *e.g.* as 'back pressure' or still worse 'backwash,' in cardiac disease (for 'high venous pressure'); the pressure of fluids is of course equal in all directions, in health and disease. Or again, 'the operation had no return'; 'give him something to make his heart compensate properly'; 'did the case drink beer?'; 'he had been abroad a lot'; he was a *tremendous* aid to us.' In a very kind letter a superior officer wrote to a bereaved mother 'Your son was *frightfully* popular in the regiment'; and so forth. 'Case'—the state of a patient—is continually used for the man himself, and many are the consequent confusions of pronouns and genders. Soldiers write of 'evacuating a case' by which they do *not* mean that they gave a patient a purge. Other such phrases of hospital slang are 'There was no von Grafe,'

‘I refracted the patient’;—phrases which may pass for a private notebook, but not for formal composition. In describing the diagnosis of obscure mental disease it is unseemly to write of the patient that ‘you tried all you knew to make him give himself away’; for on paper at any rate it looks heartless, as well as vulgar. ‘Potatoes were forbidden’ is as easy to write as ‘potatoes were knocked off,’ etc., etc. It is remarkable indeed how little hospital or military slang has contributed to the life, precision or lucidity of medical discourses. It seems to be bred not of nature and spontaneity, but of gregarious shallowness and doddiness, and to be as faulty in significance as in fashion it is vapid and slipshod. Slang must be used then with distinction; it is not for me to defend Henry Vaughan’s splendid indiscretion:—

*Stars shut up shop, mists pack away,
And the moon mourns.*

The recall of *obsolescent words* is a delicate matter. Custom is our chief guide in language, no doubt; but whose custom?—the custom of the illiterate, of the pedant, of the craftsman, of the educated man of the world, of the poet, of the elegant essayist? Words which to the illiterate are obsolescent, to the cultivated writer may be familiar enough. For instance, for the journalist, ‘opinion’ is almost obsolete; he abases ‘theory,’ to take its place. An antiquary, as he tells us, has a ‘theory’ that a certain coin is of Constantine; in the next paragraph he himself has a ‘theory’ that a burglar climbed over the garden wall and

let himself in by the cellar window; in the next a 'theory' that the leader of the opposite political party talks nonsense; and so on (p. 111). Thus such words as 'tragedy' (used now for any calamity), are defaced. The beautiful and invaluable word 'charity' is degraded to almsgiving; our only other english word 'love' is so laden with meanings of kindred, sex, and sentiment as to be unfit to supplant 'charity' in 1 Cor. xiii. (*ἀγάπη*), and elsewhere. We are not called upon to be in more than charity with our enemies. We, who shrink from pedantry, scarcely venture nowadays to speak of 'opinions' or 'notions,' or to keep 'theory' for its proper uses. So also that useful little word 'because' is dying out, overlain by such clumsy and inaccurate phrases as 'owing to the fact that,' and so on. Thus words are wasted, tarnished, abused, or lost: but at what point does a word die? at what stage of its neglect or evanescence have we to reconcile ourselves to its debasement or loss? Generation after generation of men of letters have extended the range and the riches of our tongue, and conferred precision and distinction upon the words of it: are we to be deprived of some of these, significant as they may be, because the man in the street is forgetting them? or certain meanings of them because the coarser and shallower notions of the many have no need of their refinements? As Dryden says, "For the enrichment of our language we must trade both with the living and the dead." May we not then try stealthily to restore to life some neglected

words which cannot well be spared? For example, 'relatives' (or 'relations') always seems to me a vapid word; why do we let slip kin, kindred, kinsman? And is not 'warrant' far better than the prevalent 'authentication'? and so on.

Multa renascentur quae iam cecidere, cadentque
Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula.

Hor. *Ars P.* 70-1.

In this matter much must be left to the tact of the writer; if an obsolescent word is used it should seem inevitable. If we have a care to see our thoughts and things clearly, definitely, and as it were objectively, as an artist sees the lines and values of natural objects, we may then furnish our memory with all and any words and means of expression which represent them most intimately or vigorously. But seek for strong and new thoughts rather than for strong or strange words. Surely none of us has a more intimate sense of the finer edges and surfaces of nature than the student of natural science, yet, as a writer, it is in the sense of balance, of renunciation, of relative values, that he often fails. In the chemistry of nature, as in other spheres, how true it is that

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!

The student will do well indeed to give a few evenings to philosophy, to learn the values of such words as 'cause,' 'matter,' 'substance,' 'force' or 'energy,' 'reality,' 'phenomena,' and so forth.

In conclusion, let us remember that the function of concise and lucid prose is not merely a function of writer and reader, full and just as this immediate relation may be; it is by the sum of many such intimate relations that truths of thought and idea are broadly established. Yet how is truth to be built thus if the conversations of writers and readers be vague or shallow, crooked, fastidious or insincere? Vivacity, curiosity, versatility, adroitness, crispness, smartness may be well enough; or they may be as the crackling of thorns. Let us admire the hand of Time which, dissipating the vain and perverted in culture, disengages and purifies its deeper and sincerer elements: when Time is on its side work becomes classical; if for the day "*quod ubique quod ab omnibus*" be fallacious, for Time it is sure.

CHAPTER II

ON COMPOSITION

THE Greek and medieval schools did us priceless service in creating strong, flexible, and fitting words and phrases for the expression of general ideas, of definite propositions, and of subtle distinctions. For the verification of premises the elder Greeks had not time to do much, and the younger Greek and the medieval schools had a different task to perform; namely, to block out the schemes of larger and more stable societies. Heresy was damnable because it mined, and creeds were imperative because they confirmed, the foundations on which greater societies were to be built; so the unquenchable faculties of analysis were turned, not upon the foundation, but upon the superstructure of Christendom. Thus every feature of logic and language was wrought, fretted, and chiselled into fantasy; but thus the tools were perfected, and the craft was learned. To-day, in his new heat for digging and exploring foundations the laboratorian is forgetting this art by which his new

ideas, when they come, are to be constructed and signified; he is forgetting that "language is the most precious of the tools of humanity." By the experimental method he has verified a world of facts no doubt, but he is slow to perceive that, without sure reason, facts are dross; and that, if he has not lost the fine instrument of reason which his fathers had made for him, he is allowing it to rust. So he resents subtle argument as pettifoggery; as if the subtlest reason could be a match for the infinite elusiveness of nature! Pedantry, as I have said, consists not in subtlety, nor even in a show of subtlety without its substance; at its emptiest the chiselling of language into its finest lines is useful as a multiplication and explication of its resources; pedantry consists in the use of a plastic and various medium, without a sense of history and of relative values. Grammar is not always pedantry; mathematics is not pedantry; military manœuvres are not pedantry; but pedantry it is to take grammar for literature, mathematics for physics, or manœuvres for war. That dialectic is neither knowledge nor common sense, none knew better than Plato; none knew better than he that literary form is not itself literature: but Plato knew that through form and dialectic lies the way, if not to materials, yet to build materials into knowledge and beauty. In the followers of those authors who are tempted to work for form without stuff, when matter fails and manner predominates, literature is not; on the other hand, many a modern scientific treatise contains good but undressed materials of

knowledge. Stuff is better than style, yet bricks and mortar are not a house. To talk of Newman's marvellous 'style,' as to talk of 'incomparable Janes,' has become a commonplace of 'culture'; yet in Newman we admire the crafty use of subtleties of meaning and distinction which he had learned by conversation with medieval schools of thought, although, because of the partial illumination of his mind, his symmetry and subtlety were ineffectual. Yet, as Acton said, "he was so much better when he was wrong than most men are." We may well try to imitate the sinewy articulation and suppleness of Newman's argument; but we must try also to adapt and develop it for the far larger purport of the modern knowledge and thought with which Newman was not conversant.

The following short notes on composition have no pretensions to unity or completion, nor even to system; they are to be no more than occasional counsels and criticisms. They fall conveniently under such heads as grammar; order of periods, sentences, and words; misuse of words; emphasis; tautology; metaphor; stops; and some minor sections.

Grammar.—English grammar is simple, and the idiom governed by usage rather than by rules; as Mr. Bradley says (*loc. cit.*), "English has the peculiar advantage of a noiseless grammatical machinery"; but, were it otherwise, I cannot occupy myself with elementary education. In the universities we find not a few scholars who have learned many languages but not english. Manifold

scholarship does not suffice to make a good writer, nor exact science an exact writer.

Many admirable men of letters, it is true, make slips in composition, a fine carelessness at which no sensible reader takes offence — *colorabiles ineptiae*. We do not wonder at some rough places in the mighty, as in Bunyan; and we should resent their being trimmed up. Horace Walpole writes, "You know better than me," and the construction can be defended (Willis, *loc. cit.*); and again "The French have promised letters of marque to whoever fits out" (a privateer). That masculine writer Leslie Stephen is prone to such slips. Gibbon, and even Landor trip occasionally. Gregory the Seventh (Hildebrand) indeed declared "*Vehementer indignum existimo ut verba caelestis oraculi substringam sub regulis Donati.*"¹ It is the habit of obscure or graceless expression we have to guard against. Many a bad sentence is grammatically correct. Against some common faults, however, even in grammar, the student must be admonished.

Misuse of pronouns is still too frequent to be excused. It must be admitted that in English the pronoun is very elusive, yet, by a little watchfulness in the order of words and clauses, ambiguity may be avoided. The pronouns, says M. Bréal, are the most mobile things in language—'*ils voyagent perpétuellement.*' Hence the use of "that detestable 'the latter'" (p. 64). Here is an example from

¹ The grammar of Donatus ruled the latin of the medieval schoolboy.

a recent thesis: "*He* said to *his* patient that if *he* did not feel better, *he* thought *he* had better return to say how *he* was." This is an unusually fine specimen, no doubt; but minor ambiguities of the kind are abundant. A well-known critic writes: "Even Shakespeare's imagination was not fired by Augustus, and *his* Julius was inclined to rant and only inspired *him* to great verse after *he* was murdered." An able writer in a metaphor says, "We use a saw to make a fiddle, we throw it aside when we come to play upon it." The following sentence bothered me no little till I perceived that 'it' was the 'permit'—"My friend got a permit for his camera and, although he left it on board, he photographed many scenes on the way" (see "*This* and *That*," p. 64). A celebrated passage of Jeremy Taylor is marred by a fallacious pronoun: "Where our kings have been crowned their ancestors lie interred, and *they* (ancestors?) must walk over *their* grandsire's head to take his crown." He is a bold man who tampers with the great Bishop of Down, but would not the sentence have run even more finely had it opened—"Where their ancestors lie interred, our kings have been crowned," etc., etc.? Perhaps the most frequent of these ambiguities is the occurrence of 'it' after two or three antecedents, the reference, likely enough, being not to the last of them. This sentence is taken from a considerable author and good scholar: "Show the governing faculty of reason a contradiction, and *it* will renounce *it*; but till you have shown *it*, blame rather yourself than him who is unconvinced."

Here the first 'it' seems to stand for 'reason' (though related to 'contradiction'); the second 'it' must mean a proposition of the unconvinced person; the third 'it' must refer to 'contradiction.'

On the revision of a manuscript, pause at every such pronoun till you are sure that its particular antecedent is unmistakable. Remember the well-known example: "No one yet had demonstrated the structure of the human kidneys, Vesalius having examined *them* only in dogs." (Human kidneys in dogs!)

The following example of the vague pronoun, from the pen of a master of prose, cannot be cited as a grammatical error, but who would defend it? "Then A. B. came up, and said *he* wanted to talk to C. D. about a certain matter which *he* might like to know." The first 'he' duly refers no doubt to its antecedent A. B., and the second duly to its antecedent C. D.: still the construction is far from lucid. The translators of the Bible took little heed of their pronouns.

False nominative relations are not confined to pronouns; e.g. "Of all diseases none are (is) more difficult than *the study of* appendicitis." Here study becomes a disease.

The neutral or indefinite pronoun 'one' should be used sparingly in english; 'one says,' 'one does' are good french or good german, but, if used indifferently, are not good english. I say "if used indifferently," because there are occasions when the indefinite pronoun has its point, as in this borrowed example: 'One may well be afraid when

the lions roar'; here, while the concrete and personal element of fear is retained (which 'a lion's roar is fearful' hardly retains), cowardice is considerably distributed. But in 'One opens a vein at once,' there is no such gain; write 'A vein must be opened'; or, if a personal opinion is to be given, 'I open a vein at once.' A charming lady writes, "Cobras and kraits were a peril in our hospital, and *one walks about* at nights with a lantern." Think of that! The use of 'you' and 'yours' as indefinite pronouns is generally vulgar, and not rarely unpleasant; *e.g.* when a student reads to me, '*You* may then get secondary deposits of cancer in *your* liver.' To write 'In Graves' disease *you* get a fine tremor of *your* hands'; or '*You* cannot rush *your* patient straight into a diabetic diet, as *they* cannot stand it,' is as vulgar as Bottom's 'I could munch *your* good dry oats' without his humour. Yet in '*Your* worm is *your* only emperor for diet' the poet purposely conveys a touch of kin.

The following sentence, culled some time ago from one of our theses, is perhaps a 'record' example: "Then *I* should advise putting *your* feet into hot water, when *he* will feel a gentle perspiration breaking out, and next morning *one* will feel the cold passing off." Even in more careful writers the pronoun 'one' is sometimes followed later in the sentence or paragraph by 'we,' 'your,' etc.

I note that an indirect construction is often used to avoid the little word '*I*.' It would seem

that an impression is abroad among the writers of academic essays that the first person is indecent. No doubt, as in our manners generally, self must be intruded with tact; we must intrude, that is, just so much of one's self as the reader wants, and no more. Authors such as Montaigne, or Lamb, or even Pepys, can attune their readers to a long and intimate personal converse which in authors of smaller gifts would be tiresome or offensive. In lyric poetry the self of the poet is of its essence; if the poet's self is uninteresting his poem expires. The knowing and rather too familiar journalists who provide the news and gossip of London give us a little more of the complacent 'I' than a sense of the *τὸ πρέπον* would approve; but of the reader of a thesis, or other such paper, it is expected that he speak, in due measure, of himself—of his own work and his own opinions, and persistently to evade the first person singular is in him insignificance or affectation. Egoism may lurk even in impersonality.

Participles and Gerunds.—A participial clause is often concise and effective, as in this, 'What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece,' etc.; but it is a very common fault to leave a participle 'hanging'; that is, without a subject: *e.g.* 'Referring to your letter of yesterday Mr. Jones has seen the applicant,' etc. To whom does 'referring' apply? 'Sir, adverting to your advertisement please forward,' etc., is doubly shocking; again, 'My thesis was half written, having consulted Professor X. as to the subject.' Did the thesis

consult the Professor? 'Complaining of shortness of breath the nurse lifted her into bed' (*i.e.* the nurse complained?). So likewise in these examples, 'Looking back on the affair the mistake seems to have been,' etc.; or, 'Preaching in chapel an old woman said to him' (which of them was preaching?). 'These I have, having bought them,' etc., is correct; but 'These are in my possession, having bought them' is incorrect. In 'The bullet indented the coin, thus saving his life,' 'saving' duly follows the antecedent 'coin'; but the hanging participle may seem to refer to the bullet, so that we have, as the French say, the *construction louche* (squinting construction). 'Losing one arm the soldier was drafted,' etc., '*Without translating*, gentlemen must not talk Latin, nor *smoke*, nor swear, in the presence of ladies' for—In the presence of ladies gentlemen must not talk Latin without translating, nor smoke, nor swear. 'This had no effect on the old hospital remaining free from disease,' 'The patient was found *post mortem* to be suffering from a dilated stomach'; 'We had before us three or four hearts dying of coronary disease'; 'The presence of a precipitating antibody'—(falls as a precipitate, or precipitates something else?); these instances are as perverse as uses of the present participle as they are bewildering as propositions. In 'this book is easy reading' we take 'reading' to be a substantive; but the mode is better avoided. When, as in some of these instances, the participle changes the tense of the sentence there is a double error or ambiguity; *e.g.* 'All attempts at cure, such as *killing* the

parasite in the lungs, *were* in vain'—a dubious instance perhaps, as 'killing' also may be called a noun substantive; yet the phrase is awkward, and such elliptical phrases used without vigilance are apt to lead to *louche* constructions. The following are inadmissible: 'I discussed a series of cases occurring (which occurred) in this hospital'; 'Mr. Robinson was twice married; his first wife dying in 18—he married again,' etc.; 'The building stood for many generations, it *being* pulled down however fifty years ago'; 'He ran up the hill, and arriving at the top (as he arrived) fainted'; 'This desperate man, as to whose having murdered Lieutenant ——— there is no doubt' is at least inelegant; 'I intend doing' (to do); 'I purpose going'; 'To which I propose alluding' (to allude); 'We are contemplating walking back'; 'With a view to determining' (determine); 'It was good of you helping me' (to help); 'I intend showing'; 'I am intending taking a turn' (doubly bad), etc., etc.; 'The error is being fallen into.' When a participle is used absolutely in english the case is the nominative; *e.g.* we do not say 'him only excepted,' but 'he only.' But it is not for frequent use; indeed the absolute construction—*e.g.*, 'It having been necessary'; 'He dying soon after'—does not adorn english prose. Yet a recent State paper begins, 'It having been intimated from the Dominion of' etc.; and farther on, . . . 'This they believe, they advising,' etc.

Changing Tenses.—A very common solecism is to change the tense in the course of a sentence or

of a paragraph. We must choose present or past and stick to it. The perfect is often used for the pluperfect (*e.g.* 'has again done' for *had done*) 'persons who have (had) resided abroad,' or for the imperfect. Tenses are to be changed only when the sense is changed; as in 'The leaves *were* dry and brown; under the microscope there *is* seen,' etc.

The double passive is a clumsy mode of speech, and in many cases hazy. Why do we say 'Were considered to be produced by' (for 'were attributed to'); 'His voice was unable to be heard'; 'This change must be able to be effected'; 'This is required to be made an exception'; 'The tax is permissible to be deducted' (Government Regulations); 'The meaning may not be able to be made out'; 'The estate has been contracted to be sold'; 'A frothy fluid would be able to be squeezed out'; 'The box was not allowed to be opened'; 'No doubt it will be able to be got rid of'—the endeavour to grasp the notion of this last sentence turns one almost giddy. 'It had been attempted to supply' (for an attempt was made) is nearly as clumsy. In an article before me I read 'It ought to be insisted upon that cretins are educated' (the writer meant the contrary—that they are not educated but ought to be).

Transitive and intransitive verbs: *e.g.* 'The patient *quiets* down.'—There is no authority worth mentioning for this use of the verb; nor is the use needed. So again 'The appendix perforated.' Transitive verbs in the passive become intransitive; *e.g.* in 'I will bleed him' the verb is transitive; in

'he was bled' it is not transitive. Even in the active some verbs, as 'to give,' become transitive only by means of the proposition 'to': *e.g.* 'I will give to him'; but to write 'The patient *was given* a rhubarb pill' is inelegant; and gratuitously so, for we can say as readily that it was given to him. For 'The remedy should be given a thorough trial' read 'Should be well tried.' The following are common instances of a like solecism: 'I will write you to-morrow.' 'Her Majesty *was pointed out* the site of the memorial.' 'We *were shown* the insect under a lens.' 'I was handed a letter.' 'He was sent a specimen.' Still it is true that some of these phrases are coming into normal use.

Past Tenses and Perfect Participles.—Of some verbs the past tenses and perfect participles are often confused: *e.g.* 'The bone was broke' (broken). 'I had scarcely began when he begun' (a double error). 'He drunk (drank) the mixture.' 'The rags must be burnt' (burned). 'I learned (learnt) by experience.' Elia wrote correctly 'A grace and a dignity which would have *shined* in a palace.'

The Subjunctive mood is falling into some disuse; but is still effective for emphatic doubt. However, 'if' often means 'seeing that,' when no doubt is assumed; in this case the subjunctive is not wanted.

False Concords.—These are relatively few, but they happen occasionally: *e.g.* 'The shame and pain to which his *failure* expose him.' '*Nothing* but his poverty, modesty, and diffidence prevent.' 'This tablet with the window above *are* a tribute,'

etc., is part of an inscription in a cathedral church. In a certain fine passage we read 'Their instrument was the human heart, their harmonies those of the human affections' (insert *were* after 'harmonies'). 'The professor with his friend and his pupil *were*' (was). 'Man after man *were* (was) caught in the ambush.' 'Policy as well as fashion *dictate*' (dictates). 'Gout as well as glycosuria *were* (was) present.' 'Neither the one nor the other *were* (was) there.' Sometimes even in careful writing a false concord will creep in furtively; as *e.g.* 'My intentions were good, but my perseverance faulty' (*was* faulty). 'His gait is reeling and his steps (are) irregular.' 'The outline was blurred and the details (were) indistinct.' Or again, 'The complexion *is* pallid, the forehead wrinkled, the nose depressed, and the lips thick and everted'; here 'and' should follow 'wrinkled,' a semicolon be put after 'depressed,' and *are* inserted between 'lips' and 'thick.'

Of other false concords these are frequent: '*Neither* of these boys *were* (was) remarkable,' etc. '*Nobody* ever put so much of *themselves* into *their* work.' 'Of these persons none (no one) *were* (was) robust.' 'Now, none of these things *were* (was) done.'

Some correct writers put a plural verb after a singular noun when, by the qualification of two or more kinds of adjective, it is put to mean various things: *e.g.* 'Vocal and instrumental music *are* provided.' Conversely, a singular verb may be defended if governed by two nominatives so closely

related as to form one idea: *e.g.* 'Praise and glory surrounds his throne.' 'The pain and tenderness is,' etc. 'Time and the hour runs through the roughest day' (*Macbeth*, I. iii.). 'When care, mistrust, and treason waits on him' (*Hen. VI.*). Or, more audaciously, 'Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows.' Vaughan (*The Shepherds*) writes:—

Sweet harmless lives! on whose holy leisure
Waits Innocence and pleasure.

'Not that our knowledge and judgment *is* riper, but that our desires are another way' (Hooker); 'this elegance of language and variegation of prose and verse gains upon the readers' (Johnson on Addison); 'Convincit ratio ipsa et veritas' (Cic.). Some plural substantives condense into singular use; *e.g.* 'a works' (of engineers), 'thermo-dynamics,' 'a barracks,' etc. Thus also 'Regression and progression exists when we breed from variants,' is defensible and indeed effective; as thus the intimacy of the two aspects of change is signified.

A relative pronoun may determine the number of the verb: *e.g.* 'One of the most valuable *books that have appeared*' is correct, for 'that' relates to 'books,' not to 'one.' 'This *was* one of the first objects *that were* found' is likewise correct. 'I am one of those who are unable to refuse my assent' is correct as to *are*; but consequently 'my' should have been omitted.

It is not well, unless deliberately for emphasis, to *change construction* in the course of a sentence: *e.g.* 'The reaction first described by Jones, and to

which he gave the name of,' etc., should run 'described by Jones and named by him,' etc.

Whose—is conveniently and correctly applied to things as well as to persons.

Cases.—Errors in cases are few and venial; but I find in a thesis before me, 'The patient did not know *who* to speak to.' Such phrases as 'Between you and I'; 'Do you mind *me* seeing them'; and 'I heard of him (his) running away' are better avoided, even in speech.

Than as a conjunction does not govern a case.¹ 'I know you are wiser *than me*' should be 'than I' (am). Don't write 'Scarcely had he gone *than* (when) William said.' Avoid such an uncomfortable ambiguity as this, 'Antony was not less desirous of destroying the conspirators than his officers.'

The 'and which' and 'and who' blunders are by no means yet extinct: *e.g.* 'For these scenes painful to witness, *and* which did no good,' write 'Scenes which were painful to witness and did,' etc. Again: 'A man working in the field (*and*) who ran forward,' etc. The 'whom blunder' may be mentioned here: 'The two persons *whom* he thought were far away.' 'Mr. Jones *whom* I thought would have helped me' (in both instances read *who*).

That.—Keep down your 'thats'; they multiply like lower organisms (p. 151): *e.g.* 'He told me *that* he told you *that* you were to see *that* all was in order,' etc.; 'I cannot suppose *that* you mean

¹ A correspondent has reminded me, by Milton's 'Satan, than whom no,' etc., that with a relative pronoun sometimes it does.

that the dog saw the rabbit and *that* he ran away from it.' 'That that' is an ugly couple; *e.g.* 'I am of opinion *that that* is a good method,' or 'it is certain *that that* creed,' etc., for the second 'that' in both read *this*. The able author from whom the sentence is taken writes 'that that' three times in eight lines! 'That' is often improperly intruded: *e.g.* 'Whether the one had expanded, or (that) the other had shrunk,' etc. In many sentences 'which' can well be omitted; *e.g.* 'the problem (which) you have to solve.'

'*This*' and '*That*.'—When two subjects are mentioned *this* refers to the latter and *that* to the former, a good and efficient rule often transgressed: *e.g.* we write correctly 'The patient suffered from nephritis and pleurisy; that the physician observed, this he overlooked.' 'After writing the life of X. the author undertook a history of the period; the first volume of *that* (this) history has now appeared.' By the pronoun 'that' the reader, to his confusion, is referred to the life of X. Authors complain of the difficulty in english of managing the pronouns (p. 131). Leslie Stephen¹ writes of the "special difficulty of making the 'he's' and the 'she's' refer to the proper people without the help of the detestable *latter* and *former*:" *e.g.* "'If we fix our eyes upon the object, as the *latter* (it) moves on,' etc.; 'The pleasure of a garden does not depend upon the *latter's* (its) acreage'" (from a considerable writer). In the *Times* I read of "the *latter's* murder"—and wished it were true! If the respective uses of

¹ *Studies of a Biographer*.

‘this’—‘that’ were observed much of this difficulty would be removed; as in this passage: ‘He encouraged the fearful, and pacified the violent; those with his words, these with his example.’ When but one subject precedes the pronoun, *this* is to be preferred: *e.g.* ‘Moreover he was accused of partiality, *this* he denied.’

Not uncommonly a paragraph begins with a vague ‘This’: *e.g.* ‘This being so,’ etc., etc., where ‘this’ may indicate any one of several antecedents or the sum, or none of them, without definite distinction. It is better, therefore, to insert a noun substantive after ‘this’: *e.g.* ‘This problem,’ ‘This story,’ and the like.

Do not insert *how* after *when*: *e.g.* ‘When it is considered (how) that,’ etc.

Genitive.—Ought we to write ‘I heard it in a speech of Mr. Gladstone’s’? is a question often asked of me. ‘Gladstone’s’ may be regarded as an inflectional genitive—as we say ‘in an undertaking of *his*’ (not of *him*); if this be the notion we might discard the ‘s as obsolescent. But this scarcely covers the case; after ‘Gladstone’s’ some following noun might be understood, such indeed is often the intention: *e.g.* in ‘This gloss we discovered in a note of Mr. Gladstone’s,’ we may take ‘edition of Homer’ as understood after ‘Gladstone’s.’ ‘He was a friend of Wilkinson’s’ is clearly incorrect.

Whether in the genitive of a noun ending in *s* (*e.g.* Socrates) we should write Socrateses, Socrates’s, or Socrates’, is not a matter of grammar but of

custom, and the last is the most convenient. Usually however, as also in the plural of such nouns, we avoid these hisses by a periphrasis: *e.g.* 'in the opinion of Socrates.' 'Would there were more Socrateses in the world' is harsh.

A common grammatical error is the forcing of an *alien preposition* upon a verb: *e.g.* 'Of which he had heard but never seen' (seen *of*); 'This addition can be applied and connected with the instrument' (applied *with*). Or by the omission of a necessary preposition the meaning may be vitiated: *e.g.* 'Much depends on the home and the care bestowed upon them.' Here *on* must be repeated before 'the care,' as the home is not bestowed upon them. To forbid us to end a sentence with a preposition is pedantic; although a certain school inspector did tell the children that "A preposition is a wrong part of speech to end a sentence *with*" (see p. 88). Some writers, it is true, delight in a profusion of prepositions.

Singular and Plural Nouns.—"Are you aware, Sir, that I am one of the Directors' wives?" "Madam, if you were a Director's only wife I should still object to your taking my seat."

Whether greek be 'compulsory' or not, latin cannot well be omitted from a good education; yet when in theses before me I read not only *prodromata* (*sing.* prodromon—*pl.* prodroma) *passim*, and not rarely also 'a phenomena,' 'a data,' and so forth, ignorance is scarcely an excuse. Yet 'prodromata' heads a chapter in a fine medical work just issued from a University Press. And what

are we to say of a well-known physician who wrote not long ago of 'vocal fremiti'! In editorial paragraphs of smart newspapers I have lately read of 'omnibi,' 'excursi,' 'comitiae,' and even of 'non possumi'; 'apparati' is pretty common; 'carnivora' appeared lately in a leading scientific magazine; in a well-known book by a celebrated author we are told that 'the hands of the Scipii were nailed to the rostræ'—blunders which remind us of Frank Lockwood's jest, 'They will apply for a mandamus! Then we will apply for a brace of mandami' (p. 143). Soon after an advocate had used some such pedantic plural, the Judge quietly asked if the witnesses had deposited their *affidaverunt*.

By the way, Professor Welch, in a private letter to me, called attention to the difference between 'prodrome' and 'syndrome.' 'Prodrome' (from *πρόδρομος*) is properly a dissyllable (cf. hippodrome); 'syndrome' (from *συνδρομή*), like 'syncope,' should be pronounced as a trisyllable. The final *e* may then be dropped from 'prodrome,' as from 'symptom.' 'Syn-drom-e,' as the Professor said, is worth keeping, to signify, as in Galen's use of it, the sum or group of the symptoms ("τὸ ἄθροισμα τῶν συμπτωμάτων").

The purport of a sentence is often obscured by a neglect of *the generic singular and plural*. In a recent thesis I read "We detected a copious growth of streptococci and of bacilli coli communes." Here what may be scorned as a 'small criticism' is one of much importance. 'Bacilli coli com-

munes’ meant here many individuals of this one species; had ‘*streptococci*’ the same meaning: or was the plural a generic plural signifying more than one species? The context does not tell us; but I think the sentence should have run ‘*streptococci* and *bacillus coli communis*’; ‘*bacillus coli communis*’ being as to species singular, and ‘*cocci*’ as to species plural. Again, ‘The growth showed affinities to the *carcinomata*’ is correct, for the writer meant to a group of several varieties; but to say that ‘secondary *carcinomata* were scattered in nodular masses through the liver’ is wrong; as the nodules were presumably of one kind, and the *name of the kind* should have been in the singular; thus in ‘The operative treatment of uterine *myomata*’ we should read *myoma*.

It is pedantic to use *greek and latin plurals* of words taken into our own tongue, such as ‘portfolios’ ‘diplomas,’ ‘ratios,’ ‘triposes’; the rule is to confine these declensions to technical terms, such as ‘*bacilli*,’ ‘*vomicae*,’ ‘*radii*,’ ‘*venae cavae*,’ etc. Thus to write ‘*asyla*,’ ‘*lexica*,’ ‘*dogmata*,’ ‘*musea*,’ is pedantic, as ‘*sanatoria*,’ ‘*criteria*,’ etc. soon will be. We rarely make any technical gain in writing ‘*sequela*’ rather than ‘sequel’; to write ‘There were no complications nor *sequelae*’ is piebald work.

To digress for a moment: foreign words incorporated into our tongue should submit to our pronunciation; a foreign accent breaks the flow of a sentence. How silly, *e.g.* is ‘r’strong’ instead of a frank ‘re-stau-rant!’ A Frenchman does, properly,

pronounce 'sport' as 'spore.' 'Gararge,' 'massarge' reminds us of the trippers' 'Cally' and 'Parry.'

Before leaving grammar I may inquire why scientists in their essays often go out of their way for an *indirect construction* when it does but take the life out of their sentences. We read '*There is found a blue coloration,*' '*There exists a marked tendency for the parts to unite,*' '*There was bronchitis present,*' '*There are generally recognised to be four groups,*' '*There are well known to occur various changes,*' 'And to the apathy of the sufferer there was added an appearance of exhaustion,' 'We have the body endeavouring,'—all vapid substitutes for direct assertion, such as '*It turns blue,*' '*The parts are very apt to unite,*' '*The body endeavours,*' and so forth.

Finally I may notice a certain false sequence in concords, as seen in such phrases as 'I intended to *have written*' (for 'I intended to write'); 'I should like to *have seen* him' (for 'I should have liked to see him'); 'It would have been wrong to *have refused*' (for 'to refuse'); 'I should have deserved to *have been dismissed*' (for 'to be dismissed') 'He would have liked to (*have*) read it.'

Order of Periods.—In the construction of English prose we have to consider the order of the chapters, of the paragraphs, of the sentences, of the clauses, and of the words. In these divisions nearly all thesis writers go astray. Given a block of thoughts, how is it to be sculptured? Many essayists do fairly well with descriptions, but when they undertake the discussion get confused.

They have not thought the matter out, or they are untrained in the handling of ideas.

In building essays we have little concern with the *chapter*; the subject matter of a thesis, in the case of M.B. at any rate, may be comprehensible in one chapter. Some larger papers however, which deserve the name of treatise, are divisible into chapters: for example, functions of the cell may be regarded in their physical, chemical, and vital aspects; and each of these great divisions may properly occupy a chapter of its own: or, again, even within them important subdivisions may reach the scale of chapters.

A chapter consists of sections, visible or invisible; and on the order and content of the sections much of the lucidity even of the chapter depends: a mechanical order is better than none; an organic order—an order of thought—is better still. An order of thought may be either that of the research or that of exposition (p. 19). But from the outset the reader should see clearly what the author is driving at; and that by his intention every particular is shepherded on the way. If the orders are confused the reader must return time after time upon his steps to appreciate the proper place and value of each phase and limb of the argument.

In plotting out then the main divisions of the argument we shall set down the lines of it upon a slip of paper, so that some general view of it may appear in the first paragraphs; thenceforward in more and more detail the facts and notions upon

which the main idea is founded may be displayed gradually. Although a division larger than a paragraph may be a chapter, yet in many works several sections, shorter than chapters, may be indicated by a blank line, by indicative words in heavier type, or by indent. In writing of a disease, for instance, such sectional chapters may follow a division of the subject into causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and so forth; but if the thesis deal, let us say, with the pathology of the disease only, then the morbid anatomy, the histology, the morbid processes, the chemistry and so on would occupy the several sectional divisions.

In setting out the longer divisions there is some danger of admitting materials not germane to the subject, and a greater danger of dividing the matter in broken proportions, or in broken order. A distinguished English author reminds us that "a French author always recognises the truth, too often forgotten elsewhere, that every part of a book should be written with reference to the whole."

On turning next to the *paragraph*, I find in too many papers that this feature has a precarious existence or none. Not infrequently indeed, in page after page, sentences are treated as paragraphs; or again the paragraphs, if any there be, do not correspond with natural parts of the argument, but are fragments or hunks of the body of the thesis, parcels, like a string of sausages, rather than limbs of it. In a thesis now before me one paragraph deals with operations, simultaneous and successive,

in double empyema ; it then turns aside to describe a single empyema of another kind, cured by aspiration only : there, although this last subject is to be taken up again later, this paragraph ends ; and in the next the writer goes back again to operation in double empyema ; and so forth. Now we must bear in mind that a paragraph, unless it be in a summary or emphatic position, is more than a sentence ; it is a group of sentences, one bearing on another, and thus compassing a wider meaning than the sentence ; it has accordingly its own subject and unity, though of much narrower scope than the chapter. A careful portioning of the matter into such paragraphs, all sufficient and various enough to contain the several limbs of the argument, but none too long for the reader to grasp, is a great assistance to him ; but thus to isolate mere sentences, to hop by little paragraphs, as it were by stepping-stones, is almost as fatiguing to the jolted reader as, on the other hand, to trudge over lengths of stuff without beginning, middle, or end, without those pauses and recoveries on the way that the frail faculties of man require. Typists are accused of breaking up the paragraphs of the MS. to multiply the folios ; in such a case the copy should be returned. If the paragraphs obey the contours of the thought, the composition gains in the variety which the rise and fall, and the variable parts and periods of the full argument, impart to the mind and the eye. The paragraphs of some anxious thinkers become wearisome by a piling of exception on exception, or of caution upon caution ;

a continual 'hedging' which disturbs the articulation of the sentences, and gives us a windy diet of interdictions. On the other hand, 'to paragraph' a short sentence as a summary, as an axiom, or for emphasis, is often very effective.

Here below then, as we have to think in segments, we shall let the stages of our pilgrimage halt and vary with the natural turns and periods of the subject.

Yet, after all, if the thought be in good order, the reader carves out chapters and even paragraphs for himself; and if we are tired we can stop, if not at the best halts yet where we please. Such is the gentleness of a book that we may cease to take note of it, may neglect it, or even at our caprice throw it aside; and yet again and again it will open its amiable heart to us. Thus chapter and even paragraph we may uneasily dispense with; but the *sentence* we cannot ignore, for the sentence is the elemental constituent of prose. If he forgets to model paragraph and chapter the author makes perusal less easy for us; but if his sentences are awkward, shapeless, perplexed or obscure, his ore must be very precious if we are to toil on with him. Is there not a certain arrogance in the author who cares little, or not at all, for unseemliness; who will put us out of step without apology?

Choppy Sentences.—At school, in the english lesson, if such lesson perchance there be, the scholar is taught to shorten his sentences; but there is a place for the long sentence as there is

for the short one: the short sentence brings up morsels of stuff, or drives home some aphorism, emphasis or contrast; as in this example from the biography of Bishop Fraser: in a paragraph of two octavo pages, Bryce recalled to us many great prelates before Fraser and with him; and, as their several features varied and the interest increased, his sentences were various also, carrying more and more weight till, after three or four of six or eight lines in length, he concluded,—‘His career marked a new departure, and set a new example.’ Thus in eleven words the idea is happily consummated, and our attention refreshed; the long and periodic sentence builds up the conception, or parts of the conception, resuming argument upon argument, each in its logical order, in its own best light, and in its proper bearings upon the rest. It is proper to weighty thoughts, and to a strong thinker. In an ephemeral essay, after some suspensions, comes this brief sentence: ‘A man of thirty, if he be of liberal education, may read even the very newspapers themselves without much hurt.’ Henry Sidgwick, after a large description of the Homeric banquets, says: ‘Political dinners are very primitive institutions.’ In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, after a fine and no doubt purposely imposing description of night sky and constellations, comes, as a paragraph, “‘One o’clock,’ said Gabriel.”

The teacher of english then should not say absolutely that the sentence must be short; but, as to construct a long one takes more grasp and skill than the ordinary schoolboy possesses, that it is better

for the beginner to keep to brevity. But in evasion of the difficulty of constructing long sentences, and of aptly resolving suspensions (p. 85), we may fly to the opposite extreme. We may be tempted to curtness, or endeavour to make our sentences smart: 'crisp,' as the journalists put it; that is, jerky and snappy: yet a run of such phrases, by their jolts and stops, are as wearisome to persons capable of sustained thinking as the longer period or paragraph may be to the childish. While for matters of weight the more dignified and sustained form of expression is a becoming vesture, and frivolous matters are thrown into the pert and petty phrases they merit; the bulk of interesting prose should be cast in a pleasantly various form. Of snippets perhaps Seneca was the inventor; but of the 'crisp' and 'snappy' sentence Hazlitt was the parent, and carried it, in my opinion, too far. In fifteen lines of his, now taken at hazard, I find few sentences running over one line, and many of two or three words only; yet the human mind has breath enough to last longer than this. Dr. Postgate has said "The modern sentence is an arrangement within a line, the ancient within a circle." In this abuse short sentences check the flow and disintegrate the structure of prose; we get billets instead of branches. The following is no unfair example of this too frequent manner of Hazlitt; forcible no doubt, but, after a while, like a tattoo, or a cavalry trot, too bustling and bumping to be pleasant:

I cannot say that the party at Lamb's were all of one description. There were honorary members, lay brothers. Wit and good fellowship was the motto inscribed over the door. When a stranger came in, it was not asked, 'Has he written anything?'—we were above that pedantry; but we wanted to see what he could do. If he could take a hand at piquet he was welcome to sit down. If a person liked anything, if he took snuff heartily, it was sufficient. He would understand by analogy the pungency of other things besides Irish blackguard or Scotch rappee. A character was good anywhere, in a room or on paper. But we abhorred insipidity, affectation, and fine gentlemen. There was one of our party who never failed to mark 'two for his Nob' at cribbage, and he was thought no mean person. This was Ned Phillips, and a better fellow in his way breathes not.

And so on; reminding us, and to its disadvantage, of the sailor's log:

At $\frac{3}{4}$ past 2 came to the wind, on the larboard tack. Saw 17 ships at anchor; 13 were line-of-battle ships, 4 frigates with 2 brigs, and 2 bombs. Immediately made all sail. Cleared ship for action, and hove overboard ten bullocks.

Here the short sentences are proper to a swift and dashing episode, and we get them: in ordinary narrative, and in common life, we are not to be hustled along so breathlessly. Some modern French authors, not journalists only, are sinners in this fashion; and it would be easy from their volumes to quote page after page of too curt sentences. A scene which swiftly opens to sight and as swiftly vanishes may delight us; but a rapid succession of fleeting visions, like the glimpses vouchsafed to us as we flash through a long series of railway tunnels, is distressing, *e.g.*: "Telles ont

été les impressions d'un vieux Parisien pendant ces trois jours. Elles peuvent être fausses. Elles sont sincères. C'est ainsi qu'il a vu les choses. Mais cela ne dure pas. Simple épisode. Tout rentre dans l'ordre." And so on, and so on, for columns of such spasms: yet this is from the pen of one who at other times has proved himself to be among the first of living essayists. On the other hand, if we turn to authors of a century or two before our time, we shall find how beautifully sentences of a page in length or more were articulated, and how delightful still is their flow.

In essay writing then facts and conditions may well be arrayed at first briefly and severally; but as they are marshalled into full argument the periods should be more extended; though even then no doubt a succession of long sentences may become burdensome. We shall not forget, in sentences as well as in paragraphs, that variety is pleasing.

The longer the sentence then the more arduous its architecture; a page-long sentence in a German book is usually made up as a bundle of faggots; few Germans can build a sentence after the manner of Goethe or Heine. I open at hazard at the last sentence but one of "A Chapter on Ears" in the *Essays of Elia*, an essay not designed to be imposing in structure; yet this sentence is a page long, and one of fourteen lines succeeds it.

The right rule is then not to attempt the long sentence until the practice of shorter ones has given some facility in sentence-building; then,

as we find that each kind has its own place and effect, we shall give to the various extents and qualities of our matter a variety of forms.

The same considerations may be applied to *diffuseness*; there is a diffuseness which without tedium makes for freedom and elegance in writing; by it the matter flows more sweetly into the mind of the reader. This art of felicitous dilution, of graceful digression, of happy amplification, is the last accomplishment of an author; but in scientific essays, fortunately for us botchers, this quality is less important, perhaps rarely expedient: authors of scientific papers had better be content with the pruning-hook.

Grammarians have analysed the sentence very carefully; and were I to try to speak here as a grammarian I should have to classify clauses not only as simple and compound, a division which speaks for itself, but also into 'adversative,' 'concessive,' and the like; all of which confectionery, as a mere friendly and informal counsellor, I will omit. Of two technical rules, however, we must take more heed than we do; namely, that, usually, time clauses come first and place clauses second to those: *e.g.* 'At sunrise | from the tower of the city | the bells began to peal.' As in time clauses we include those containing 'then,' 'when,' 'while,' 'often,' 'sometimes,' 'before,' 'after,' 'whenever,' etc., as well as those more fully and directly declaratory of time, so those of place include clauses with 'here,' 'there,' etc., unless the importance of these parts of speech be quite subordinate, or metaphorical.

Order of Clauses.—Omitting then the technical classification of sentences, and the simple sentence on which we need not dwell, of the *compound sentence* I will note but two kinds, *the loose* and *the periodic*. The periodic sentence can end in one manner only; that is, on the completion of its period: a loose sentence is one which might have ended at an earlier pause. Here is a ‘loose sentence’: “He was struck down by an attack of brain fever, producing acute delirium, which lasted at least two months, but from which he completely recovered before the autumn.” This sentence might have ended at any one of the stops; there being no implications of later clauses. But if I take another: “A brain of such imaginative power, bound to a heart so morbidly sensitive, furiously seeking peace through indefatigable work, with the ever-present shadow of blighted affection within and passionate abhorrence of the social misery around—here was a nature perilously near to a crushing collapse” (and so on); this, though part of a much longer sentence than that quoted before it as ‘loose,’ could not be ended anywhere before its close: it is a ‘period.’ On the other hand, this celebrated sentence of John Bright is, technically speaking, ‘loose’: “The Angel of Death is abroad through the land: we may almost hear the beating of his wings.” It might have ended at the colon; although by the division the majesty of the image would have been diminished. It is not to be supposed then that a ‘loose’ sentence is so far a bad one, or a ‘periodic’ sentence so far a good one;

a loose sentence is no doubt more easy to write, but mere difficulty makes no standard of composition. Each variety has its place and its virtues, each its perils and faults. If the loose sentence may be formless, motley, or trailing, the periodic sentence may be — and too often is — involved, loaded, or lumbering. The loose sentence is formless when its clauses transgress the order of thought; it is motley when alien matter is thrown into it; it is trailing when the extension of it is tedious or inept. But to append an unexpected clause, as we can in a loose sentence, may be very effective; as, *e.g.*, “. . . its voice . . . frightens those who wander by night in the deep woods, which are its palaces.” But the following loose sentence, taken from Matthew Arnold (*Literature and Dogma*), brief as it is, succeeds nevertheless in being formless: “But this does not make it the less really trifling, or hinder one nowadays seeing it to be trifling directly we examine it.” The following sentence was “cast loose,” but, by reversing the order of the last two clauses, it might have been turned into a period: “Victory, wealth, authority, ^hhappiness, all have departed; though bought by many a bitter sacrifice.” Probably it was cast loose to give it a meditative quality. But here are loose sequences which have no such quality: “Some beautiful tints of green may be observed walking up the avenue.” “The wall gave shelter to a few small birds and to a solitary *man that watched them from the bleak wind*”—a comma after ‘them’ would have mended the sentence. “These

figures on (a Greek vase) are quite misdrawn . . . in the copy by Mr. X." If the last five words had been put first the reader would have been saved a shock. Another instance, from the War Office: "All officers will have to pass an examination for promotion to the rank of *Commander in certain technical subjects*."

And spare no pains that the parts of your sentences, whether loose or periodic, run in logical order: let us analyse the following example of a loose sentence (from a recent scientific paper) which offends logical order throughout: 'This body is with difficulty made to rotate, and sets itself in motion again if it be stopped, and at once does so.' Now, before we can conceive the difficulty, we want a picture of the action, thus: 'This body is made to rotate—with difficulty: *and* (but) sets itself in motion again'—how so, when it is rotating already? the next clause should intervene—'if it be stopped, sets itself in motion again' (when 'again' would obtain its proper place of emphasis)—'and at once'; here seems to be the end?—no! 'does so' comes trailing in; *i.e.* in the final place, the place of emphasis (p. 153), are two almost idle words: if remain they must, the clause should be transposed—'and does so at once'—'at once' being now in the place of emphasis it deserves. Thus remodelled the sentence would run: 'This body is made to rotate with difficulty; but if it be stopped it sets itself in motion again, and does so at once.' In this new order how much more lucid and alive is the statement! And

would not this sentence, from a fine critic—‘which is almost tragic in spite of its humour in its intensity’—run far better thus—‘which in spite of its humour is in its intensity almost tragic’? The next example in its order conveys unwittingly a sinister suggestion: ‘The native rulers by largesses mitigated the effects of famine, and *thus by the way wiped out the memory of many ill deeds*; it is for our Imperial Government to use similar occasions for relief,’ etc.

To pass from the formless to the *motley sentence*—that in which the subject is changed, or incidental matter slipped in, giving rise to odd or cross divisions—the well-known ‘University, Pork, and Family Butcher’ is a grotesque instance of such “unconformable strata.” Here are some stock examples of *lack of unity*: ‘A piano for sale by a lady about to cross the Channel in an oak case with carved legs’; ‘Henry VIII. had an ulcer of the leg and great decision of character.’ Yet is the following, from a thesis before me, much better?—‘Its breathing was rapid, and its temperature 103°, and its mother said it was frightened by a rat.’ For a humorous effect of course incongruities may be happy, *e.g.* ‘My Lady Waldegrave has got a daughter and your brother an ague.’ So again: ‘Mrs. Potts . . . left the house in a flood of tears and a sedan-chair’ is, as Dickens intended, not only formless but motley; alien matter is introduced into it. In the serious sentence however, as in the paragraph, in the chapter, and indeed in the whole of a work, unity must be diligently observed; without

unity the work, or its parts, if not disfigured, becomes disjointed and patchy. In their minor degrees no faults in academic essays are more frequent than incongruity and crossly divided matter; even in those which in matter or in grammar may be otherwise inoffensive.

Ambiguity.—Clear up equivocal sentences, such as ‘Classes for intellectual and physical education can never be made up of the same pupils.’ Why not, if differently distributed? This writer testily answered, “Oh, you know what I meant.”

Of *trailing*, or lagging, *sentences* it is needless to give examples; they may be found at will: suffice it to say that if a sentence is to be cast loose, the successive clauses must not fall off in strength or in meaning, as with sinking clauses the lag is felt much more. *A conditional clause, therefore, must not be left to the end: e.g.* ‘This reaction can always be obtained, if the temperature is kept at 20° C.’ (the clauses should have been reversed); nor an important modification, as, *e.g.*, ‘Robinson found a diminution of the albumen in the serum of starving animals.’ Again, in ‘Twenty-eight patients were treated with hypodermic injections, of which eight died,’ the ‘trail’ pulls us up unexpectedly, and makes us fear that they died of the injections! The qualifying clause should have followed ‘patients.’ A certain paper, admirable on the whole both for matter and form, was disfigured throughout by such unhappy remissions of conditional clauses to the ends of the sentences; as thus: ‘. . . this need never occur, if my method be used’; here an

essential qualification takes the form of an after-thought.

In grammars you will find rule upon rule to govern you in ordering your sentences; and when you have had some practice you may find a little interest in the rules. The best of them is Ben Jonson's—to make your sentences 'round and clean.' The following sentence, which I happened to read a few hours ago, is well knit, simple, lucid, and strong (of its fairness I have not to judge): 'No mercantile man, or mercantile nation, has any friendship but for money, and alliance between them will last no longer than their common safety, or common profit, is endangered; no longer than they have an enemy who threatens to take from each more than either can steal from the other.'¹ (See p. 130.) But no one ever learned to play a game by perusal of its rules: while training your ear on good prose, turn your sentences this way and that before you pass your fair copy, so as to fix them in the form which reads best; the rules you can enjoy afterwards.

In english *the periodic sentence* moves in large orbits with some difficulty, as our tongue has lost the declensions and inflections which in greek and latin keep the reader in closer touch with the sense; in english long suspensions cannot be carried forward without the danger of losing this support. The more then the length and complexity of a sentence the more must we see that its contents shall be congruous, its order logical, its subordinate

¹ Attributed to Samuel Johnson, *Times L.S.*, May 18, 1922.

clauses in due service to the principal clauses, its terms lucid, and its emphases properly distributed; moreover its rhythm must accord with its sentiment, and its tones must be sweet. So, even in english, periods of some sweep, if their parts are well distributed, may be highly effective by the pleasure which we receive from truth, method, elevation, rhythm, and sound. Examples of this distinction are to be found more readily in poetry than in prose; though in balancing tone and accent we must carefully avoid any semblance of blank verse: there is a harmony of prose as there is a harmony of verse, and these arts must be used each for its own ends. (p. 172).

Suspension.—In prose then, for breadth of conception, dignity, or impressiveness, the ear and the understanding are willing to be constrained by suspension; but mere drags, delays, or inversions, without such rewards, they resent: thus it is that the bootless suspensions of German prose are grievous to us. In verse we are often offended by violent suspensions in order to compass a rhyme. In the construction of large and effective periods Gibbon's eminence is well known; but at times even he, like Johnson too reminiscent of latin, put upon english a little more than our language could carry; or gave too great a stateliness to ordinary paragraphs.

As then in music so in prose, our suspenses must be resolved happily and effectively, every suspension having its full reward. Even short suspensions need for their success a good ear, and a nice order

and balance of clauses, increasing successively in weight and logical climax until the acme is attained. If a suspension may bring a little surprise, yet, like epigram, this salt, to be effective, must be used adroitly and sparingly. In this sentence on the South Sea House—"walls whose substance might defy any, short of the last, conflagration"—we almost hear the author's happy stutter. In the first of the following sentences we are held in a suspense which indeed is brief, but maladroit: 'Their respective views on political matters would have hindered, *we feel sure*, their friendship.' I have on my notes specimens of long sentences built throughout in such uncouth masonry, but it is not necessary to print them. On the contrary, I have chosen a long sentence, without ornament but finely, variously, and rhythmically constructed, so that it carries its length easily, and the reader with it; every suspense having its full reward.

And there, too, rises before us a living image of the majestic poet who had come after Phrynichus, the poet who, first of the Hellenes, had built up a stately diction for Tragedy, and also invested it with external grandeur; the poet who had described the battle of Salamis as he had seen it; whose lofty verse had been inspired by the wish to nourish the minds of his fellow-citizens with ennobling ideals, to make them good men and true, worthy of their fathers and their city; the poet to whom many an Athenian, sick at heart with the decay of patriotism and with the presage of worse to come, looked back, amidst regret for the recent loss of Sophocles and Euripides, as to one who had been not only the creator of the Attic drama, but also in his own person an embodiment of that manly and victorious Athens which was for ever passing away.—Jebb, *Classical Greek Poetry*, p. 184.

Short suspensions within longer periods need a nice handling in English. Here are instances of a common mode, but a mode to me inelegant: 'To improve, as much as possible, the general health,' etc. (the second and third clauses should change places). 'I wish owners of such MSS. would let me see, and make extracts from, them' is clumsy. The clauses, 'He made many sketches of, and gave close attention to, the village churches of the county' (for, 'He paid close attention to the churches, etc., and made many sketches of them'), are not only in the wrong logical order, for the more general should have preceded the more particular statement, but by this suspension an emphasis and an accent are thrown upon the little words 'of' and 'to' which they do not merit. Here are three more instances, culled almost as I write: 'They are at liberty to, and are much tempted to, palm off on the public.' 'He was strongly opposed to, and completely disposed of, these objections.' 'There was suspicion of, and some indignation at, his intervention.' Suspensions between nominative and verb are also uncouth: *e.g.* 'it, in favourable circumstances, grows freely'; 'it would to a large extent destroy.' The following example is less objectionable, but the value of the order does not quite reward us for the arrest of our attention: 'There are few more striking events, and few more remarkable coincidences, in history'—'in history' should have stood first. If, for our amusement, we write 'For 'tis their nature to,' we defend it on the ground that

'to' intends 'to bark and bite,' and therefore the little word is emphatic; but to write 'There were more conditions than he *had any knowledge of*' (*than he knew*) is inelegant, for 'ov' is neither an emphatic nor a pretty ending. The proper ground of objection to ending a sentence with a preposition (p. 66) is that thus, to speak generally, a place of emphasis (p. 154) is occupied by a weak word. In the following sentence the suspension is rewarded by a pregnant qualification: 'The double myth is explained by the hypothesis of independent, though psychologically similar, *origin*'; its fault is the ugly approximation of *ar* and *or* ('lurrror—igin'!) (pp. 172-6). And I think that in this sentence of Mr. Balfour (on Lord Salisbury) the suspension is effective: 'He was apt to illuminate a subject with, but to shroud himself behind, some brilliant epigram.'

Parenthesis.—Of this kind of suspension I will say only, that to use parenthesis justly a skilful and parsimonious hand is required. Unless for the briefest point of explanation we shall let parenthesis alone.

Before quitting suspensions I must make particular reference to that of the '*Split Infinitive*': for example, 'Concentration seems to practically alone determine this reaction, or seems to frequently immediately precede it.' "Well, the author may say, why should we not split the infinitive?" The first and perhaps sufficient answer is that authors who make the best of the language do not do it. Search all or any of them, living or dead; no

instance of it, save by an occasional oversight, will be found. Even writers such as Carlyle or Ruskin, who press the resources of the language to the uttermost, never play this prank; for instances we must turn to the printed matter of company promoters, auctioneers, news and puff writers, and second-rate novelists. But, if the question be pressed—What reason would careful authors give for this avoidance?—to it, as to many other such questions, we may be content to reply that those who dwell on the power, profit, and beauty of a language beget in themselves a sense of fitness and harmony by which they judge of usage, and perceive instinctively whether this and that be, or be not, accordant with the genius of a language, with that development of its virtues which in the long run will make the best of it as an instrument of thought and sentiment. This instinct, as betrayed in fine prose, is as virile and true as it is delicate and elusive. Still we may fairly be pressed to give some closer reasons, and such reasons are not far to seek: generally, as I have said, even short suspensions are not always welcome in english; and in this case we are dividing the inflection of a verb. Now, as the verb is one of the most important words of the sentence, to divorce it from its attendant particle is a “suspension without reward,” and therefore tiresome. Thus, besides imparting an air of jauntiness, a split infinitive is rarely or never telling; usually indeed it weakens the sense and puts an adverb in a less effective place; *e.g.* the clause quoted above from an essay

before me, 'Concentration seems to practically alone determine this reaction,' should have run 'In practice concentration alone seems to determine the reaction': 'in practice' comes now, where it is wanted, in an emphatic place (p. 153); and 'alone' is attached to 'concentration,' where it is wanted. Again, 'The motor area is found *to not at any point extend* behind the sulcus centralis'—if the ear can tolerate this, is the understanding satisfied? If the writer aimed at emphasis he should have written 'Not at any point is the motor area found to extend,' and so carried the sense and the reader with him. 'To always sleep with the window open' conveys the notion of an everlasting sleep—with the window open; whereas in all probability something less than this was meant. A minister writes 'it is better to first endeavour,' whereby the value of 'first' is abated. 'To firmly bring the bandage round,' etc. is a bothering way of putting it; 'firmly' comes on us before we have formed the notion of what is to be done firmly; so 'To bring the bandage round firmly' is more lucid, and 'firmly' comes, as it should, in a place of emphasis, and in the order of action. In the sentence 'Not enough to decently house, feed, or clothe him' 'decently' should come last. 'To, if possible, obtain' is open to a like objection; before we can judge of the possibility we would perceive what is desired. In 'to *thoroughly* endorse' the writer did not *see* what 'endorse' meant (p. 187). 'To kindly inquire' means to inquire in a kindly manner, but this was not the intention of the writer. I never

realised how little could be said for the split infinitive till Professor Lounsbury published his defence of it. To adduce 'To more than double the output' as defence by analogy is no defence, for the verb *do* is understood.

'To' is sometimes omitted from an infinitive with disadvantage: *e.g.* 'I did not prompt him to praise or disparage the book,' which construction makes *disparage* seem to be a kind of praise; before 'disparage,' therefore, *to* must be inserted.

'Try *and* find,' 'Be sure *and* come,' are not effective forms, even in gossip.

Not content with splitting infinitives, uncouth writers are beginning likewise to interpolate matter between the article and the noun, and between the pronoun and the verb, suspensions as ugly in form as awkward in sense; thus, 'He at once exclaimed' (for 'At once,' etc.); 'He three times went'; 'He however said'; 'It later became the fashion'; 'It sometimes works wonders'; 'She with great skill etched,' etc.; 'His attitude to the in some quarters prevalent creed'; 'He gave way to the in all respects objectionable practice.' 'The commonly affected joints' may be defended as adjectival, but it has the same kind of clumsiness—'the joints commonly affected' runs more fluently and logically. Indeed the growing habit of inserting suspended clauses between an auxiliary and its verb does not make for elegance; *e.g.* 'So they have everywhere used them' is not only a bad but a confusing order—to what does 'everywhere' refer?—'they' or 'them'? Ought an eminent schoolmaster to write

'and he several times takes'? When a certain lady begins a sentence 'We to-day find' (for 'To-day we find') we scarcely know whether to resent the blot on a beautiful sentence or to be grateful to her for work so charming that the least of lapses is conspicuous. In 'The outlook has, during the last two generations, undergone improvement' it is rather the object than the look-out which is supposed to improve; moreover time clauses should usually come first, and of place second. Unless the reward be great, as for instance when the auxiliary is emphatic (*e.g.* 'They never *are* permitted,' 'We necessarily *must*'), such suspensions offend both ear and understanding.

Order of Words.—From the ordering of clauses we pass easily to the order of the words in a clause; this order may be as important as the order of clauses in a sentence (p. 154). As we have seen, english being an uninflected language, the order of its words determines the meaning. Hence it is that classical scholars may write ill english. Now the faults of disorder of this kind are not hard to note, and to correct, if the writer, as he revises his sentences, will but trouble himself to balance their words, and to try over variations of the order of the clauses. Thus in 'The stresses on material of approximately spherical form due to differences of temperature' the words 'due to' etc. should have followed 'stresses'; as it stands the meaning is false. To order a long sentence or a paragraph is, as we have seen, a higher accomplishment; to make a few words run nicely is no difficult task. To

refuse this minor care is an ill compliment to the reader, and, if his matter be worth the writing, an ill service to the author; yet, even by good writers, this part of syntax is continually neglected.

Let us gather first a few samples of *verbal disorder*: 'The Englishman killed the Frenchman' has not the same meaning as 'The Frenchman killed the Englishman'; nor 'Not always wise' as 'Always not wise'; yet the difference is one of order only. 'People ceased to wonder by degrees' is a lame form for 'By degrees people ceased to wonder.' 'Tradition is even silent' is an error of sense for 'Even tradition,' etc. 'Can only be relieved by surgical means' is an unfortunate dislocation of *relieved only*. In a recent criminal action it was admitted that 'feloniously attempting to steal' (the charge made) was an offence unknown to the law; but a misdemeanour there was of attempting feloniously to steal. The charge was amended accordingly. A wrong order may have comical effects, as in these examples: 'They followed the party step by step through telescopes.' 'A crammer cannot be prevented from continuing to cram by any power on earth.' 'The *first* eclipse of the sun was foretold by Thales'—an astounding statement by no mean author. 'Abstain from iced drinks when heated.' 'B. says his grandfather was living when he was a child.' 'A clever magistrate would see whether he was deliberately lying a great deal better than a stupid jury.' 'Reported as stolen by the undergraduate.' 'All convicted persons are not guilty.' 'I don't think any of them were' (for 'I think none

of them was'). 'I don't think he is coming.' 'In writing to one another' (one to the other). Or again (by Shelley himself), 'a bankrupt thief turns thieftaker in despair' (put last two words after 'thief'). 'His *memory* ought to be honoured by *interment* in Westminster Abbey.' 'Erected to the memory of John Phillips accidentally shot as a mark of affection by his brother.' 'The clergyman declares aloud that he believes it a dozen times every year of his life.' 'Many new exhibitors figured in the list of goats' (Official Report of a great London Dairy Show). 'We can offer you a dining-table which will seat twelve persons with round legs, and one which will seat fourteen persons with square legs' (a recent advertisement). 'I understand that when he died Cardinal Mezzofanti spoke at least fifty languages.' 'Five children have been born at once in several different countries.' 'He seeks to demonstrate the effects on the heart by percussion of the carbonated baths' (from a very serious and important paper). 'A fragment of an author who has perished in Diodorus' (from a learned work). 'If machines are not used with the deliberate object of employing more labour' (the writer meant rather the contrary, viz. 'If . . . with the object of . . . machines are not used'). This kind of disorder, if not so grotesque as in the cases quoted above, appears continually in our theses, perverting the sense and bothering the reader. *E.g.* one candidate reads to me, 'I could, when killed, discover nothing abnormal'; another that 'It is due to the circulation in the blood of micro-organisms'; a

third that 'It is hard to find a resident medical officer except in very large workhouses' (he did not mean that the larger the workhouse the easier it is to find the physician). (See order of adjectives, p. 98.) Pugin's son told me that his father said of glass painters: "They say stained glass cannot be made now as fine as it was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, do they? I tell you, as fine glass can be made as ever. What they can't do is to put it together."

On the other hand, a variation of the order of words often gives freshness or emphasis to a sentence: *e.g.* "Quae enim domus tam stabilis, quae tam firma civitas," etc. This is of the finer art of composition. See again p. 146.

Adverbs are often *placed badly*: *e.g.* in 'Although the thing is quite artistically negligible'; 'artistically' ought to have followed 'although.' By 'This hat does not apparently belong to me' do we mean that it does really?—or ought 'apparently' to have come first? 'The report was not unfortunately sent in' means it was timely; whereas the writer intended to say the contrary. 'Only one rat was successfully inoculated' should run 'was inoculated successfully' (presumably the inoculation was successful in all the cases). So in the sentence 'It is well known that arsenic is slowly excreted' the writer did not mean to assert that arsenic is excreted, however slowly; but that the excretion of it is slow: he should have written 'Arsenic is excreted slowly.' Again, in each of the sentences 'The dose is to be gradually increased' and 'in

such a way as to gently draw the lever up' the adverb should have been placed at the end, as in each case the context required the adverb, not the verb, to be emphatic (*vide* 'Split Infinitive,' p. 88, and 'Emphasis,' p. 153). 'The first two arrivals' is an incorrect order unless the arrivals are in pairs: otherwise it should run 'The two first,' etc. These little niceties are potent to maintain the reader's attention: *e.g.* if he is told 'he does not unhappily care,' the suggestion to him is different from 'unhappily he does not care.' 'Both,' 'either,' and 'neither' are continually misplaced: *e.g.* 'He found both traces of sugar and albumin,' where 'both' is intended to apply not to traces but to 'sugar and albumin.' 'He was neither fitted by abilities nor temperament' (here 'neither' should follow 'fitted'); as likewise in 'he was neither disposed to sanction bloodshed nor deceit.' 'All not' very often appears in our theses for 'not all'; *e.g.* 'All men cannot jump a five-barred gate' would be an absurd order for 'Not all men can'; yet I am told that 'All secretions are not arrested by opium,' and that 'All mosquitoes are not vehicles of infection'—a different proposition from 'Not all mosquitoes,' etc. 'Well otherwise' is not equivalent to 'otherwise well;' nor 'not shown to be' to 'shown not to be.' Few writers think of the proper place of *that flighty little word* 'only'; *e.g.* 'He only touched the fringe of a large subject,' wherein the writer meant 'He touched only the fringe,' or 'the fringe only.' 'It was *only in the Ptolemaic period* that Africa made use of the Camel of Asia,' meaning not *till* then.

'*Only seems to occur*' has a widely different meaning from 'seems to occur only.' 'Only too frequently he attains his purpose' and 'This is only what was to be expected' are correct; but in the sentence 'Evidence of bribery only being found in four out of thirteen cases' the context does not tell us whether *only bribery* was detected, or it was *no more than found*, or was *found in four only*. 'The planter must work hard for nine years and *only in the tenth* year will he make any profit'—a brief success. 'The church was *only consecrated* in the year 1899.' 'He was only made Colonel in 1888'—was he supposed to be General? 'It can only health and joy afford' (for 'It only,' etc.). 'It can *only* be eliminated by spare and careful diet.' 'It was only in 1912 that it was settled'—a brief settlement. 'He only had asthma during the winter' (quite enough too!). 'It can only be cured by diet' (what more than cure do we want?). Indeed 'only' is often inserted detrimentally. In the following sentence, 'Such successes only emphasised his previous failures,' the adverb, though rightly placed, spoils the sense: his successes did more than this; thus again in 'It is only reasonable to suppose,' etc. The use of 'only' for 'not until' is not elegant, and often ambiguous; *e.g.* 'then and only then' should mean 'at that time and no other.' 'My judgment was *only modified* when I heard all the story.' 'Swinburne *only died* in 1909' (this is the first sentence of an important essay). 'His hair only turned grey when he was sixty-five.' 'Britain can *only regain* economic soundness by

better land cultivation' (but is it not worth regaining?). 'V. B. was *only in the hands* of the enemy a short time' (for 'only a short time'). 'The breathing only became easy after two days'; 'James only became King of Aragon when his elder brother died,' or 'Jack only died last year': what more did these people want? 'Mr. Tomkinson was *only knighted* (or *only married*) last week.' 'The bear was *only shot* on the 16th.' 'He would only see his home about 8.30 in the evening'—a brief glimpse. 'The letter was written in 1803, the essay was only published twenty-three years later' is surely a very misleading sentence from an eminent writer.

I have given many instances of the 'only' blunder as it is incessant.

The rule for placing an adverb is not quite the same for active and neuter verbs; those it usually precedes, these it usually follows: but in particular cases it is often well to subordinate this rule to precision of sense and to emphasis.

Also is often misplaced; *e.g.* 'Jones also did' is not equivalent to 'Jones did also'; in 'I also place some crystals of the salt in the solution,' 'also' is not meant to qualify 'place'; but should come after 'place'; or after 'salt.'

The *order of adjectives* is sadly neglected, and the neglect is fatiguing even to those readers who do not perceive the cause of their flagging attention: *e.g.* 'He had a prolonged and severe attack'; 'The hands are spade-like and short'; 'The breath was very foul and objectionable'; 'He stands quite

still and steady'; in these sentences the order of the adjectives, even if both be required, is contrary to the order of thought, and should have been reversed. 'His aid was efficacious, devoted, resourceful' (for 'resourceful, efficacious, devoted'). In the clause 'enthusiastic, respectful, distant admiration' we are chilled as we read on, whereas the crescendo of 'distant, respectful, enthusiastic' might have warmed us. Such examples meet the eye continually. How to economise our adjectives and to use them with directness and frugality will be considered again under 'Tautology' (p. 147).

Now let us pass from the order to **the choice of words**. Although, as we shall see (p. 101), from the origin and history of a word we may perceive many a delicate tint of thought or fancy, or various sidelights on meaning, yet meaning may be put out of scale, or lie under false reflections, if *etymology* be too much regarded. Mr. Bradley says (*loc. cit.*): "The original descriptive meaning of words is a palpable irrelevance; the etymological meaning has often to be disregarded before they can become satisfactory instruments of expression." Even on its invention a word may be derived awkwardly or ineptly; but, however apt in origin, words grow or drift with the things they signify, and become endowed with ever new and cumulative content. Thus a word is a sum of experience. To hold us to the bald etymology is a pedantry of the plain man, or of the half-educated man, who has not

regarded its growth. The error is common and tiresome, because in papers and theses it dogs our scientific pupils, and perverts many of their arguments. Consider the term 'hyperpyrexia': on bare etymology it means high or excessive fever; but it was applied, even in the first instance, not to mere high fever, for which no such grandiose name is required, but to a series of phenomena, of which excessive temperature is an eminent but by no means the only grave feature. As our knowledge of natural processes develops, and as we distinguish and classify them, the more or the less must the names of a class denote. In answer then to a question on the process of hyperpyrexia, to pour forth a heap of heterogeneous instances in which an elevated temperature occurred, is to lose the significance of the name. A carnivore is not any animal which eats flesh; nor do we class man as a plantigrade with the bear and the badger. To take triter instances: the words 'fresh,' 'brisk,' and 'frisky,' 'royal' and 'regal,' 'hospital' and 'hotel,' 'inertia' and 'inertness,' 'fancy' and 'phantasy,' 'tavern' and 'tabernacle,' 'sensual' and 'sensuous,' 'antic' and 'antique,' 'convinced' and 'convicted,' 'remission' and 'remissness,' or again 'celestial' and 'heavenly,' have in each pair the same or like origin; but are far from being interchangeable. 'Cherub' raises no notion of Assyrian bulls, nor does 'danger' suggest *dominarium*, nor 'veneration' Venus. 'Ounce' and 'inch' spring from the same root. Galen contrasts the derivation and the several meanings of the word

'nerve.' The meaning of a word is often detached from its origin that it may follow our thought the more freely. Furthermore, we must remember that many nouns are endowed with different proper meanings, often far apart; as 'root' (in ordinary use, in mathematics, and in philology); 'base'; 'table'; 'act' (in ordinary life, in the theatre, in university exercises); 'fast' (to run fast, to stand fast, and to abstain from food); 'content'; 'ether'; 'vision'; 'general' (a general of an army was a captain-general); and so on. In Medicine we can speak quite distinctively of General Paralysis and of Progressive Muscular Atrophy; as we all speak of a Protestant, yet are not misunderstood. On the other hand this liberation of words may lead to confusion, as in 'Doctors differ,' which is not a jibe at physicians but at learned men of all faculties. In well-written paragraphs however the conditions and circumstances of the context should settle the particular meaning of many-faced words as surely as a clef in music indicates the pitch.

Notwithstanding we shall not overlook the range and colour a word may take when, by a fine writer of prose or of poetry, it is used with some regard to its lineage; by such device it may be charged with a rare significance. When Milton writes 'In dim eclipse *disastrous* twilight sheds,' we feel the power of the astrological heritage of this great adjective; and by such concert an author, who is as familiar with the anchorage of words in history as he is with their modern use, keeps in intimate touch with educated readers. How falsely, on the other

hand, an author may write who is not in touch with literature is exemplified on many of these pages.

In progressive language and thought then a word is a function of life; and, like a living thing, undergoes, from its origin, a process of differentiation. Indeed when words do not thus develop we may suspect that thought is stationary or declining; for as thought gathers in complexity, and the objects of thought gain in distinctness, words must be continually varied and redistributed; and he who is indifferent to this distribution, and either in sheer ignorance or in pedantry drags back cultivated and distributed words into their rudimentary senses, is a foe to thought (p. 99). Were every word to be dragged back to its radicals, cultivated speech would come to an end.

Some able authors shrink from no ugliness or clumsiness of words: why should 'unmanageability' (seven wriggling syllables), be preferred to 'unruliness' or 'awkwardness'?

The Powers of the Parts of Speech.—A sentence depends much upon its verb, which is its active and indispensable element. It is said that De Quincey was poor in verbs, and moreover that those which he had were too often mere links—"verbs of existence or mere explanation," so that his prose consists of masses of highly coloured words without progression of thought or deed; so a reviewer described another book as 'rather violent impressions of nothing.' For lively and powerful prose then the verbs must be lively and powerful; "they are as the plot to the story" (Vernon Lee). A well-known

London teacher complained that his pupils habitually enfeebled their verbs by inserting the verb 'tend'—*e.g.*, 'they *tend* to injure'; '*tend* to make'; 'there was a tendency for the idea to be realised,' etc. To say that the 'constable *tended* to arrest the thief' would certainly be feeble; and 'he is a liar' is more vigorous than 'he has a tendency to lie.'

If you have a strong case state it with reserve; a weak one you will probably overstate. A well-known advocate told me that when he had a bad case he shirked 'finite verbs'; if reasons failed him he betook himself to the splendour of adjectives and adverbs. When Ruskin has reason clearly in mind the sense of his periods is perfectly balanced; when he trespasses beyond reason he is wont to beguile the ear with pretty sounds. The prose of George Sand carries us along in a lively stream; but the phrase, though not without elegance, is facile; we do not dwell upon the turn or detail of it; it lacks distinction, and here again the verbs are weak (Vernon Lee). The work is too ready; it lacks choiceness.

We perceive then that weakness of verb makes for *exuberance of adjective*. A member of Parliament resented an official deletion of the rhetorical ornaments of a question to be raised by him in the House; the Speaker answered, "We do not encourage adjectives here." With your adjectives then aim at economy, congruity, and concentration; let them be few, nervous, direct, and effectual (p. 101). Note the force and thrift in such adjectives as these: 'The portals of *illimitable* sleep'—expressing the

swift approach of death, then the rest in the long final monosyllable. 'From the Orient to the drooping West.' 'The multitudinous sea.' 'Violets dim.' 'Down, thou climbing sorrow.' 'Iris in her crystal gown.' 'Fallen from the ruined sides of kings.' 'The deep report of sullen tragedy.' 'And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.' 'Hushed as the unbreathing air.' 'Strangely visited people.' Every one of these adjectives pulls its weight. 'Lord Lyndhurst was then in the prime of his octogenarian vigour'—here the adjective saves a sentence. On the other hand do not write 'On that subject his *view* was *silent*'; 'a dry pulverulent powder'; 'his happy and felicitous speech.' In a book before me I read, 'True genius . . . acts thus and thus': why thrust in 'true'? 'A state of acute gravity' imports an incongruous adjective.

Lastly, the adjective is often attached to the wrong noun; *e.g.* 'a tender and noble trace of passion' for 'a trace of noble and tender passion.' But in 'the myriad shriek of wheeling ocean fowl,' by the transference of 'myriad' from 'fowl' to 'shriek' a fine effect is obtained.

That with our adverbs we must use a like choice and chariness I need not stay to declare. In all these exercises the poets are our masters.

It is in great part to the *meagreness of vocabulary* in the writers of scientific papers that bluntness to the progressive differentiation of the meaning of words, and a coarse and trite use of them, are chiefly due. Were I, while keeping Acts, to stop

to correct every error and to refine every vulgarity, I might fail to take the matter of the theses in hand at all. If the writer is furnished with but a lean stock of words, those that he has must be put to rude and indiscriminate uses.¹ In such a sentence as this, 'From this centre the germs were *extended* to other parts' (for 'were disseminated,' 'dispersed,' or 'scattered'), the writer did not search for the aptest word; he did not care to do so, he filled the gap with the handiest of the few in his scrip. So again in 'this result is *in favour of* (consistent with) either opinion.' Lord F. Hamilton tells us of a brother officer who, in a like penury before a beautiful scene in Jamaica, exclaimed, 'How absolutely damned lovely it all is.' I note that many of my candidates are content with one general noun—'question'; two adjectives—'marked' and 'localised'; two verbs—'involve' and 'occur'; one adverb—'markedly'; one conjunction—'while'; words so worn that they become mere counters. A problem, a dilemma, a proposition, a subject, a case, or nothing whatever, are all 'questions'; *e.g.* 'He gave credence to a doubtful question'; 'The question is one of decreased resistance' (for the *condition* or the *problem*); 'The question is one of decreased tissue change,' where *answer* would have been nearer the meaning; 'The question of the shoulder and elbow will be referred to later' (for 'question' read

¹ Years ago I found on a stall a modest little book entitled *Just the Word Wanted* (Walker and Co.); a good shilling's worth for young writers.

affection or *injury*). 'To involve,' with its ugly and upstart noun 'involvement,' has to do duty for 'to attack,' 'to invade,' 'to injure,' 'to affect,' 'to pervert,' 'to encroach upon,' 'to influence,' 'to enclose,' 'to implicate,' 'to permeate,' 'to pervade,' 'to penetrate,' 'to dislocate,' 'to contaminate,' 'to complicate,' and so forth. I see in a thesis before me 'The liver also was involved, there being a few secondary growths in it'—the author might as well have said that his lawn was involved in a few dandelions. Again, 'The anæmia *involves* the hæmoglobin'—*i.e.* a certain chemical compound is enclosed in an abstraction! 'The mesenteric artery was involved' (in an embolism)—surely the converse was the case. The following sentence, even with the context, is scarcely intelligible: 'A lesion affecting the conduction chain of one gyrus is rarely free from the damaging *influence* of *involvement* of the other.' This sentence, important as it should be, seems to mean that 'the one' is influenced and damaged by its swallowing 'the other.' Another essayist says 'the gland was not *primarily* involved' (attacked or affected). A candidate for the M.R.C.P. wrote, 'Desquamation involves the part involved'; another 'No evidence, except the grandmother, of a family involvement'; phrases which remind us of Mr. Micawber's 'pecuniary involvements of a complicated character.' 'Localised,' an indiarubber word (with its substantive 'localisation'), has to serve the meanings of 'seated,' 'placed,' 'referred to,' 'narrow,' 'small,' 'limited,' 'circumscribed,' 'enclosed,' 'indicated,' 'confined,' 'encapsuled,' 'condensed,'

‘consolidated,’ ‘determined,’ ‘deposited,’ ‘conveyed to,’ ‘diagnosed,’ etc., etc.; moreover it is often thrown in gratuitously; *e.g.* ‘a localised abscess’ (a repetition in terms). One well-known man of science, not of Cambridge but even surpassing us in this kind, has lately written that ‘many mammals have a *localised time* for migration’; but perhaps we come near him with ‘the rash often appears in *localised places*, as on the cheek.’ ‘While’ or ‘whilst,’ a time adverb, is used indiscriminately for ‘and,’ ‘but,’ ‘since,’ ‘although,’ ‘whereas,’ ‘notwithstanding,’ ‘nevertheless,’ ‘yet,’ and so forth; *e.g.* ‘It is thirty years since Sir —— became an Academician, *while* he succeeded Sir —— as President in 1896’—this is, indeed, to ‘while time away.’

Not only do we thus supply ourselves ill with words, but we are apt also, even the richer of us, to fall into *vocabularian ruts*. A censor has suggested a list of “nuisance words,” and gives some examples: ‘meticulous,’ ‘epochmaking,’ ‘true inwardness,’ ‘banality,’ ‘individual,’ ‘distinctly,’ ‘merely’ (for *very*), ‘rock bottom,’ ‘optimism,’ ‘pessimism.’ But, as he reflected, “if our minds are dull, no curiosities of vocabulary will trouble us.” It is very difficult to avoid mannerism, a thoughtless habit of slipping into monotonous repetitions, into the reiteration of outworn or stock phrases, which on occasion may be proper enough but, if repeated time after time, suggest a want of fresh thinking. *E.g.* ‘In size it is diminished to a large extent’ may be ingeniously defended, but it sounds odd. ‘Tags’ become mannerism; such

as 'first and foremost,' or 'to all intents and purposes' (where perhaps neither 'intent' nor 'purpose'—or only one of them—was the word wanted). 'Literally'—an adverb of fine lineage—has become a tiresome drudge: 'He died literally in harness'; 'The crop was literally destroyed.' Some of us are too fond of words such as 'character'; *e.g.* 'The reports are (of a) satisfactory (character),' 'The air they breathe is (of a) vitiated (character).' For others, 'nature' is a pet word; *e.g.* 'Its horns are (of a) spiral (nature)'; 'His intentions were of quite a different nature' (kind). 'To elucidate the question of the extent to which (to see how far) the reaction is (of a) temporary (nature) or (has a) permanent (character).' Many writers have discarded 'as' or 'because' for 'from the fact that' or 'the fact as to whether,' 'owing to the fact that,' etc. It is a great advantage now and then to submit our manuscript to a fresh eye, to an eye even less cultivated, as we may think, than our own, in order that our careless habits may be discovered to us.

We shall beware then of repetitions of *trite phrases*, tags, and 'clichés,' many of which are conventional quotations (p. 167): such as 'She discoursed sweet music to my ear'; 'He did not deny the soft impeachment'; 'Tell it not in Gath'; 'Bone of contention,' etc., etc. Others, like small coin defaced by wear, have lost their distinctive values: for instance, 'He was ostracised by his colleagues'; 'This auspicious occasion'; 'He cordially endorsed his remarks'; 'Let it severely

alone'; 'He received his *coup de grâce*'; 'He was one of Nature's heroes'; 'It was a veritable *multum in parvo*'; '*Hinc illae lacrimae*'; 'To cement our friendly relations'; 'Excessive exertion must not be indulged in' (in this context the 'indulgence' was dock labour); 'the rash act'; 'roaring with laughter'; 'bathed in tears'; 'your letter was immensely appreciated'; and so forth without end. In such mimicry we surrender individual character ('style'), talk like parrots, and drop into phrases as futile as this: 'The treatment is by *absolute rest and stimulants*.' Not only so, but by the lack of fresh phrases and quotations we betray the idleness of our reading, if any; *e.g.* for '*nihil humani*,' etc., would not '*Homo res sana homini*' (Sen. *Ep.* 95. 33) be a pleasant change?

Misused Words.—Partly then in meagreness of vocabulary, partly in the following of current error, partly in sheer indifference, words are misused; some grievously. Three or four of these I will deal with in an exemplary manner, in order to show how words should be weighed and tested; the rest can then be taken briefly.

Theory and *Fact* are words deplorably abused, even by eminent authors. 'Theory,' in its proper use, signifies the highest mode of scientific knowledge. A speculation, supposition, impression, surmise, expectation, assumption, presumption, or mere guess takes the more definite shape of a view or *notion*; the notion or conception, as it bears further examination, may then become more definite and be formulated as an idea or *hypothesis*. If

then the observer finds his hypothesis strengthened again and again by methodical observation and experiment, and if again and again it is verified by a continually increasing number of competent observers, it ousts competing hypotheses, if any, and rises to the rank of a *theory*; as, for example, the Newtonian or the Darwinian theory, the theory of the Conservation of Energy, the theory of Ionic Decomposition, and so forth. It may be objected that, etymologically speaking, a theory is strictly a 'view,' and may be applied to any contemplative vision of things, wide or narrow. But we have seen (p. 99) that to throw words back upon their etymology would be to throw the language back into its infancy; that as a language grows its words become more and more specific, and their uses more and more different. Yet even from Plato onwards the ideas of science and art were disengaged, while the word 'theory' inclined to science. Chaucer was correct when he wrote: "The fourth party was to be a theorike, to declare the meaning of the celestiall bodies wyth the causes." Thus as the word 'theory' gained the sense of serial order it lost that of vision. A theory then is not any general statement or apprehension, nor on the other hand absolute truth, but a particular general statement which has been so widely accepted by competent persons that it holds the field. There may be conflicting hypotheses, opinions, or explanations, but a general proposition is not a theory until its ascendancy is generally granted; we ought not therefore to speak of 'two conflicting theories' in

one field of research. I need not insist that no general statement, however dominant, however well verified, can be final: of the provisional nature of all theories we have now a remarkable illustration when the Atomic theory, and even the Newtonian theory, are being called into question. We do not regard even the modern conceptions of the intimate constitution of the universe as more than hypotheses, or lofty speculations. That a certain skull is of the Bronze or Early Iron Age, that a certain drawing is from the hand of Matthew Paris, that Miss Hickman was kidnapped by the Jesuits, that the burglar made his entrance by the chimney, may be my opinion; but when a journalist calls such an opinion a 'theory' he impoverishes a language in which far apter words are to be found. It is curious that the good word 'opinion' is falling into neglect. A reviewer tells us that in the story of Sir Edmond Berry Godfrey "Mr. Lang himself seems to hanker after a theory of suicide." Yet, if this be bad, how much worse is it to use a word of such weight flippantly, contemptuously, as a term of abuse, or as a mere cliché; *e.g.* 'It put an end to the idle play of theory' (*The Times*). The writer meant *idle speculation*. When a certain eminent author wrote 'It can only be a matter of theory,' a reviewer properly suggested that the author meant *only of speculation*. A biographer of Virchow writes: 'Virchow had a deeply rooted, constitutional aversion to all kinds (*all kinds!*) of theories, for he credited nothing that could not be definitely proved.' A muddle indeed! and this

of the founder of the *Cellular 'Theory' of Pathology*! If a theory is not provisionally proved, what universal statement is proved? It is in the degree of its proof that a theory surpasses a hypothesis, a speculation, a conjecture, or a guess. To say 'his views are theoretical' is, strictly speaking, the highest tribute to their truth; yet the other day, in an important essay, I read 'There is a certain piquancy in the theory, which Mr. —— has shown to be more than a mere theory,' etc., etc. (here for 'theory' read 'conjecture,' or 'speculation'). In another it is written 'The many theories of totemism are but wild guessings in the air'; in another the opinions of an author are called indifferently 'theories' and 'mares' nests.' A leading physician writes 'Prognosis cannot be based on theories however plausible, it can only be based on observation of facts' (are the 'facts' to be carried like pebbles in a sack?). How without his theory does the astronomer 'prognose' this year's solar eclipse? A distinguished man of letters writes 'Justly contemptuous of theory as he was, he became himself a theorist'; and no less a scientist in a certain public address protested 'against the tendency among men of science to indulge freely in the pursuit of theory.' What else on earth could they, as scientists, pursue? Again I read 'The question (problem?) has not advanced beyond the theoretical stage' (the stage of conjecture or hypothesis): the theoretical is—so far as the proof of thought has gone—the final stage. Now it is difficult to weigh the evil which this common

misuse of the word 'theory' is working in untrained minds. A scientific paper lies before me, excellent as to substance, which is blunted by the use of 'theory' indiscriminately, sometimes in its proper sense, sometimes in the sense of hypothesis (*i.e.* of an idea or working concept for which some probability exists, but not convincing proof), of opinion, of speculation, of conjecture, of surmise, or indeed of hasty ingenuities and arm-chair guesses. The accurate Henry Sidgwick wrote 'where others offer only loose suggestions he develops definite hypotheses, and these, after due comparison, become accepted theories.' If it be replied that it has become customary thus loosely to use the word 'theory,' we must repeat that for this use we have no other word; so that to use it loosely or slightly is to deprive ourselves of our only term proper to this sense.

No less erroneously, it is trivially said of a proposition that 'it is true theoretically but is not true in practice'; yet if theoretically true it must be universally true. It is idle to allege that a certain proposition is true, if it be valid only under conditions which never happen! *e.g.* 'The sap may *theoretically* make its way down to the space where,' etc. (which however it never does?). Or again, 'There is a theoretical objection to balconies (in sanatoriums) that they cut off air and light from the room . . .,' which the author proceeds to deny: by 'theoretical' he seems at first sight to mean baseless; or negligible?—from the context one cannot tell; in any case the word is used absurdly.

When a balloon rises gravitation does not become 'practically false.' The manifestation of every general or 'theoretical' law is subject of course to contingent perturbations and deflections, but the law never loses its validity, never fails of its effect : inexplicable, unfathomable, often ; evanescent never. What people mean by such phrases may be that a theoretical statement, though valid, is too abstract for immediate practical application ; thus theories of barometrical pressure are too abstract to be applied directly to weather forecasts ; they are not 'practically false,' but they enter into combinations so many and complex that in particular cases the indications are too entangled to be directly available. In other words, theory, is misleading in so far only as it is inadequate theory ; the integration of the useful and of the theoretical is a matter of time and research. In statecraft similar contrasts are found ; as Lord Bryce put it, "The habit of meditating on underlying truths, the tendency to play the long game, are almost certain to spoil a man for dealing effectively with the present. He will not be a sufficiently vigilant observer ; he will be out of sympathy with the notions of the average man." But he is far from meaning that the underlying truths are otiose or fruitless.

If we leave the sphere of science we find 'theory' supplanting 'ideal' or 'vision,' a use which in the sphere of literature is no less inept. When a historian writes of Beaconsfield's 'fondness for *theories* rather than facts,' and of his putting

'large and imposing *theories* into vague and solemn language,' I venture to suggest that 'ideas,' 'fantasies,' 'speculations,' 'dreams,' or 'visions' was the proper word. And these are not all the abasements, as various as they are many, of this unhappy but, in its proper sense, invaluable word. A philosopher in a certain review contended that 'Sir F. Pollock had minimised the difference between Dr. Joachim's *theory* and his own as to Spinoza's meaning here'—a *theory* of a *theory*! (for this context *interpretation* was the proper word). We find 'theory' used also for ideas of the imagination, and for myth; uses however not so degraded as when, by the War Office, a scheme for cadets is called a 'theory': 'The *theory* is that promotion takes place' (at this and that stage)—for 'theory' read 'presumption,' 'rule,' 'scheme,' 'system,' 'cadre'? Even *The Times*, usually careful in language, called its device for the sale of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* a 'new *theory* of book-selling,' and suggests to us 'various *theories*' (methods) of indexing. But a remnant is left! In contrast to such naughtiness it was refreshing the other day to note in a review (in *Nature*, where in the editorial columns the word 'theory' is generally used correctly) of the first volume of the posthumous papers of Helmholtz, this sentence: "From its first appearance on the title-page to the end of the book the word 'theory' is employed in its accurate sense only—to indicate not the hazy guess of a vivid imagination [or the reviewer might have said 'the idle guess of an

idle hour'], but a comprehensive survey and a concise description of facts." And, in another article: "His rehabilitation of an old hypothesis is ably done, and it is probable that subsequent work may confirm his results and conclusions, and *raise the hypothesis to the rank of a theory.*"

So Professor Noel Hartley (at the British Association, 1903) said well: "It was based upon definite observations controlled by exact physical measurements, and was therefore a theory rather than a hypothesis."

The proper climax is this: (1) guess, or conjecture, or idea; (2) hypothesis; (3) theory; (4) practice.

I have multiplied these examples because of the current confusion of thought and word and of the harm it does to public opinion and to scientific writing.

Of *hypothesis* I have just read in a journal, 'This is not a hypothesis, but the result of observations.' It is of no use to wonder what the writer meant; had he ever considered his meaning, he would have asked himself on what else a hypothesis could be founded? By 'hypothesis,' as by 'theory,' he probably meant notion, speculation, or guess. 'An hypothesis . . ., if it is to rank as a scientific theory, must be capable of verification' (Prof. Senier, Address, Brit. Ass'n., 1912). So Lord Acton spoke of 'using hypothesis with safety.'

Fact (used for 'truth,' 'proposition,' 'principle,' 'conclusion,' 'rule,' 'maxim,' 'axiom,' 'law.'). In a leading article in a scientific journal I read this

bewildering statement: 'No investigation on these lines can convert a tentative hypothesis into a scientific *fact*'; and again, 'Those ascertained *facts* (truths, hypotheses, series, or axioms?) which we call the laws of nature.' In the essays of eminent men of science we often read, 'Such and such a theory is now proved definitely to be a fact'; or, 'Both were incontrovertible *facts deduced* from observation' (!); 'Such and such a statement is no longer theory but ascertained fact'; or again, 'Theories are accepted as if they were solid facts'; 'I would urge the fact (argument, rule, or principle) that inebriety should be treated as a disease.' A physician writes, 'Epilepsy is one of the facts and not one of the theories of medicine.' What a muddle! An abstract name becomes a fact or event! It is difficult to conceive the process of thought, if thought it be, by which such statements are arrived at. Indeed, by 'fact' is often meant just our own opinion; the other man's being a 'theory.' Another essayist, denouncing 'cram,' after noting 'theory' as 'nebulous,' says 'cram consists in so many *theoretical facts*, and the student has to get up these facts'; presumably he meant principles or doctrines? for in science 'truth' means a valid affirmative proposition. In thought a 'fact' is of no value whatsoever; it is only by means of its association with other facts in the formation of general propositions that to the mind a *fact* gains any value. Yet recently it was laid down in very high intellectual quarters that 'it is the business of science to present the facts and to

let them speak for themselves'—a very unprincipled method, even if it were possible. How much better is a writer who weighs his words (Sir N. Shaw, *Nature*, July 21, 1921): 'By verification or contradiction hypotheses get moulded into theory . . . facts do not explain themselves.' Now *a fact is something which has happened*, it has no reference whatever to the future; yet we are told that 'he did not mention the *fact* that he is departing to-morrow' (*that he had decided to depart*). 'They observed the *fact* that it is *possible*,' etc. Stress is laid on the *fact* (for maxim, rule, or precept) that an architect's building must not only be 'scientifically sound, but æsthetically beautiful.' To say that the sun is shining means that up to the moment of my assertion it *was* shining. That the earth revolves about the sun is not a 'fact' but an axiom, general proposition, or theory, based upon verified facts. That on the 30th of next January Venus will be in conjunction with Jupiter is not a fact, but a calculation or prediction. That a mosquito is the carrier of the parasite of malaria is a truth or general statement, a hypothesis or a theory, but not a fact; though such a statement as this is founded upon a considerable series of facts (or verified past events) in this sequence. 'An axiomatic fact' (truth) is sheer nonsense; and what is the difference between a fact and an 'actual fact'? When we ascribe to Virchow the demonstration of the 'fact' that our conceptions of morbid processes must be founded upon histological research, we should have said not 'fact' but *truth*, or *principle*.

In most cases indeed when we say 'the fact is' we ought to say 'the truth is.' *Facts were, but are not.* That a hypothesis may become a theory we have seen (p. 113); but it can no more become a fact than a house can become a brick. This error of taking theories, hypotheses, doctrines, opinions, or assertions for facts is not a mere solecism, it is a dangerous error. Indeed, when we hear 'this is an undoubted fact,' we may prepare ourselves to expect a general proposition, or a mere assumptive opinion, uttered with precocious confidence; for the maturer scientist never regards either an alleged fact or an axiom as out of the reach of criticism.

Type and *typical* are words which fare badly in our scientific papers; for instance, to use 'type' in the sense of mere quantity or degree, as that influenza, or pneumonia, has 'changed its type,' when severity only is meant, is an error. A 'type' is a certain kind of fiction; a physician observes again and again that particular symptoms are apt to recur in series: Dr. Graves, let us say, observed an orderly recurrence of a certain group of characters, consisting of accelerated pulse, swollen thyroid, protuberant eyes, and so forth. To be sure no two instances of the recurrence were identical; and, on classifying the symptoms of the cases by their relative frequencies, this observer found that many of them, such as nervousness, fretfulness, or sleeplessness, were so frequent in disease that their recurrence here had no special significance; yet the three signs mentioned before, although severally less frequent, in combination recurred with a

frequency very much greater than the chances of mere coincidence could account for. Dr. Graves then conceived, as we know, that this association was more than a chance coincidence—more than such a coincidence, let us say, as the parallel fluctuation announced a few years ago between Cambridge Wranglers and sun-spots; he perceived that they were functionally akin to, and probably effects of, common causes. Furthermore, he or his followers began to note that certain other symptoms, such as tremor, were frequent in this combination. Other observers noted that disordered pigmentation of the skin occurred with more than chance frequency, too frequently to be a mere coincidence; though others were of a contrary opinion, and so on. The clinical observer then, having brought into comparison all the records he could get hold of, casts aside one by one the features which may be regarded as incidental, and selects those which recur in certain patients with a frequency higher than of mere coincidence. Then, within his new group, he subordinates these in the order of frequency: a few may prove constant—as perhaps acceleration of the heart only; but others, such as protrusion of eye or thyroid, tremor or diarrhœa, though not constant, have each of them more or less high degrees of frequency in the group. So, by disregarding irregular or intermediate cases, he is enabled to draw a convenient line between symptoms concurrent in higher frequency—‘the characteristic symptoms’—and those of low, or even mere incidental, frequency; and it is with the former that

he builds up his imaginary pattern or '*type*,' a conception attained by an abstracting process, by stripping off in the several cases what is individual or accidental in each. Some diseases we know are more variable about their '*type*' than others. But, as a practitioner, the physician moves in the direction contrary to the scientist; it is for him to treat the individual, to clothe the conventional skeleton, diagram, or '*type*' with the features of the individual affected; and to treat not the '*type*'—a nonentity conceived as a convention of thought—but the concrete man as he lives. A treater of types would be an abstract physician, practising *in vacuo*; the merely empirical physician, on the contrary, having but a vague notion, or none, of a type, treats the sick man item by item, not appreciating the relative values of the several phenomena of each morbid period.

Now the same considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to types in biology; and we shall agree that types are but artifices of thought, to be used by the scientist as schemes to include, not by any means all the events at work in a particular case, but certain main lines of sequence; and to signify not by any means demarcated plots of disease, for by way of aberrant and intermediate cases we may travel from any one such conception to any other, but broad outlines of its features; such features as in a landscape would be sketched by the geologist, not by the painter or by the gardener.

A *typical feature* then is not a phenomenon curious in itself, but one characteristic of a kind; it

is more typical, or less so, in the degree of frequency in which it occurs in this or in that abstract idea of a disease; briefly, it indicates an area of greatest density in certain recurrent series.

But here arises a confusion in language: type is sometimes used for *example* or *instance*; thus, 'He is the very type of an Irishman,' or 'He is a type we should do well to imitate'; we mean that, having built up in the mind from many Irish persons an abstract conception, or type, of the kind called Irishman, we light, let us say, upon Sheridan, who fulfils our idea so vividly and completely that the vision is clothed with life. To impersonate a type gives us a picture we would not willingly forgo; and, if the antithesis be not forgotten, the gain to the fancy may be more than the peril to the understanding. Nevertheless we shall avoid such fallacious phrases as an 'aberrant type,' which is absurd, or 'an inconstancy of type,' when we mean either that our examples are unconformable, or that our segregation of proper characters is as yet imperfect. Of a case we may say that it is aberrant when it deviates inordinately from our mental diagram. If we find ourselves unable to relate a particular instance to any type whatever, we may say it is 'atypical'; but we must not confuse these words and call a case 'atypical' when we mean only aberrant.

Entity is a word which is making its way back from 'Realism' into science, especially into medicine. Physicians take grave counsel together whether such and such a nosological series does, or does not con-

stitute a 'morbid entity.' Now in any use, antique or modern, entity must mean real existence or 'substance' behind a group of phenomena, or 'form,' as in this example—'Whereby it is apparent that the *vis* or energy that is in natural bodies is an entity of a distinct nature from matter simply as such'—and so on; in other words, to the kind itself is attributed a real existence behind the individuals of the kind—an ancient ghost supposed to have been laid by one William Ockham some six and a half centuries ago.

The Greek Aristotle, as distinguished from the medieval Aristotle, was probably of opinion that a *kind*, as a conception of the observer's mind, had indeed a sort of reality; but as a cerebral phase only.¹ If then by the inquiry whether a nosological series be an entity or not we seek only to know whether it be constant enough for formulation as a *conception* in the observer's mind ('Type,' p. 119), well and good; but it has not been customary to call a mental concept an 'entity'; nor is it desirable. And I suspect, for their entity, nosologists do not mean to be content with so elusive a thing. They may not be conceiving of substance apart from phenomena, but I suppose they must mean that this or the other disease has an individual existence, as of a dog or a cat. We may call a dog an entity if we like, though no one does; but certainly we cannot, as biologists, speak of the canine species as an entity. And a disease is not even a species; it is

¹ Shortly before his death Henry Jackson told me he was not yet quite clear on the history and meaning of a *kind*.

but a phase of change to which individuals of species are more or less subject. As Maudsley¹ said, "It is a diseased person, not an abstract disease or absurdly called morbid entity, which the physician has to handle." As a matter of experience we find that a man is not ill anyhow; he falls ill on one or other of certain different ways, ways which are determined no doubt by his normal structure, and by peculiarities within and without the particular case. Although cases of typhoid fever, of malaria, or of pneumonia are never identical, they are usually similar; the similarity being due in part to the similarity of man to man and of organ to organ, in part to the similarity of their causes. If I spin some similar tops and, when they are 'asleep,' strike them, and strike them pretty much in the same way and degree, so much in the same way will they fall ill; some may wobble beyond recovery, but many of them will recover, sooner or later. So a case of typhoid fever, malaria, or pneumonia, is the product of a deflection by a special external disturbance and the inertia of the afflicted individual. Where is the entity?

It was in the paper of no tiro that I noted the other day, 'I regard the cause of an infectious disease as an entity in itself, something foreign and external' [why both adjectives? (p. 103)]. Here, even if we can speak of cause as single, confusion is worse than ever, for the cause of a disease is no more the disease than a blackthorn stick is a broken head; by 'morbid entity' is usually

¹ Address in British Medical Association, 1905.

meant the disease, not its cause. It would be pedantic or irrelevant to call arsenic or lead, or even a protozoon, "an entity in itself." Another physician writes, 'Whether we regard the symptoms as an entity, or merely as a syndrome occurring in divers affections etc.' : a sentence surely a long way from clarity !

The right question concerning a particular disease is : Have I noted in a moving equilibrium, say in a man, that a certain series of changes, static and dynamic, concomitant and successive, has occurred more than once ; if so, was the recurrence fortuitous, or was each series a case of rare but orderly recurrent mode, which had escaped attention ? If so, the recurrence with fair uniformity will be observed again and again, whether by myself or by others. The cases of the newly observed series will vary no doubt ; some may trespass upon, or have running powers over ('syndrome'), phases of other nosological series already recognised. And, although no strict demarcation can be drawn around any of these series, yet there may nevertheless be difference enough, and constancy enough, to make it worth our while, for the convenience of observation and thought, to erect the new series also into a category of its own, and to stick a label on it. We shall demand then no more than this : Whether or no the newly observed series of perturbations recurs with uniformity enough to make it desirable for purposes of identification and comparison to name it ; as, for our convenience, we have named uniformly recurring, though not strictly circumscribed,

sets of stars, such as Orion or Charles' Wain? But where is the 'entity'?

The following casual list of words which are misused is but illustrative, to put candidates on their guard. I had strung them together from medical exercises for degrees before I found that in his *Errors in the Use of English* Dr. Hodgson had already done the like; from him I have taken a few more.

Above, as an adjective or noun: *e.g.* 'the above description' (which implies an *abover* and an *abovest*). 'Also the wife of the above' (from a ducal monument).

Acceptation (the being received) for 'acceptance' (the act of receiving). A gift may be offered for acceptance in the belief that it is worthy of acceptance.

Actual (for 'precise,' etc.): *e.g.* 'the actual number was ten'; 'such was the actual case in question'; 'The actual death was by exhaustion' (for the precise mode of death?); and so on. But 'actual,' like 'in reality,' etc. often a maid of all work, is more often redundant.

Alone for 'only': *e.g.* 'this alone' for *this only*.

Alternative primarily was not used of more than two, but by recent writers (*e.g.* Mill and Gladstone) the word is used of three or more. The extension is convenient, and acceptable.

Always, frequently used for 'everywhere.'

Antedates, often used for 'precedes,' *e.g.* 'the hemiopia antedated the headache.' But the word means to put a date back, as on a cheque. *E.g.* "By what would appear an antedated gratitude" (Boyle).

"Come antedate On me that state

Which brings poor dust the victory" (Vaughan).

As for *because* or *for*.

Averse to: a mimicry of 'adverse to.' 'Averse *from*' is more correct, and often more emphatic.

Avocation. During the last few years, in the search for fine language, this word has taken the place of 'vocation.' Even Ruskin has written 'in pursuit of their ordinary avocations.' 'Avocation' is a calling away; *e.g.* 'What is a scholar but one who retireth his person, and avocateth his mind from other occupations.' In these two recent instances it is used effectively: 'Here I enjoy profound retirement, safe from the interruption of troublesome avocations.' 'Outside his profession the physician should pursue some hobby or pleasant avocation.'

Between (by twain) should be used of two things only. We may not speak of 'stirring up ill-will *between* (amongst) all these various races.' Another form of error is 'between the junction of the two rivers' for 'between the two rivers at their junction.'

Capable; in a passive sense: *e.g.* 'This morbid process is *capable of being* cured'; 'The salts are *capable of being* absorbed by the membrane' (for 'The membrane is capable of absorbing the salts').

Case (for 'patient'): *e.g.* 'the case recovered'; 'the case is living and in good health'; 'cases *who* died'; 'cases which could not take such large doses'; 'a group of cases suffering from' (for 'a group of sufferers'). 'Five of the *empyematas* died' is a similar piece of clumsiness. A grimmer blunder was 'Of the 276 *deaths* 16 had gallstones.'

Central for 'axial.'

Claims (for 'says,' 'states,' 'maintains,' 'asserts,' etc.) is an unfortunate following of the Americans, who retain many uses of words far better worth our attention. To 'claim' such and such a result is not suggestive of a modest and diffident search after truth.

Climax (as 'acme' or 'summit'); a modern abuse unknown to Samuel Johnson. The 'climacteric period' is not the acme of life, but the ascent to it. In fine prose the rising and enlarging purport of the sentences of a period or oration are called by grammarians a 'climax' (*κλίμαξ*, ladder). Thus the accurate Berkeley speaks of 'a certain climax or gradation of thought.'

Commence (for 'begin'). 'To commence' is proper for formal public functions and the like: *e.g.* 'the term

commences' or 'the session commences'; so 'an action at law commences,' 'a career commences,' and so forth: to say 'I had just commenced my breakfast' is ridiculous.

Compare to may be as correct as 'convenient to,' but 'with' is more expressive.

Compensated for. 'The defect in the valve is compensated *for* by the growth of the muscle'; here 'for' is not only redundant but also perverse; as it would be in the sentence 'The apples are balanced *for* by the weight in the opposite scale.' In the sentence 'I compensated him *for* the damage done' the preposition is correctly inserted.

Connote: often wrongly used as a finer word for *denote*.

Constant is too often used for 'frequent.'

Continuous = 'uninterrupted,' 'unceasing'; **continual**, 'an incessant renewal'; *e.g.* a continuous hum, a continual hubbub.

'**Contrary**,' '**conversely**,' '**reversely**,' '**vice versa**' are not to be used indifferently. In the sentence 'The sensation of hunger is not due to the mere emptiness of the stomach . . .; *conversely* under abnormal conditions we may feel hungry on a full stomach,' '**conversely**' should be *reversely* ('**conversely**' would be 'The emptiness of the stomach is not due to the sensation of hunger'). A political speaker said the other day, 'If you wish to keep your Empire together you must have preferential tariffs,' and proceeded to urge—what he called 'the *converse* proposition'—'If you preserve free trade you cannot preserve your Empire'—but this is the reverse proposition: the converse would be 'If you wish to have preferential tariffs you must keep your Empire together,' and the contrary would be 'If you wish, etc., you must *not* have preferential tariffs.' 'The dog was not a fit companion for the children, quite the converse' (*i.e.* the children for the dog). Do not write 'quite the reverse' when you mean 'quite the contrary'; it is correct to say '*On the contrary* I deny that assertion.' The horse may be put before the cart, or *reversely* the cart may be put before the horse; but in the sentence 'As the tide flows up the channel there is flowing along the shore a current in the reverse direction' read 'up the channel . . . a contrary current flows along the shore,' for

the current, though opposed, is not 'reversed.' (This sentence also halts in 'Indirect Construction,' *vide* p. 69.) Again, 'The specific identity, or the reverse, of these two forms,' etc.—what is the reverse of specific identity?—should read 'The specific identity or difference.' 'The Mayor may take the chair, and the Vice-chancellor may propose the motion, or *vice versa*' (*i.e.* 'turn about'), is correct, but it is erroneous to write 'Whether the peritonitis set up the pleurisy or *vice versa* (conversely) we could not decide'; such errors bother the reader. We may contrast these several meanings by varying one sentence, *e.g.* 'Every person who was attacked with typhoid had eaten watercress.' The contrary proposition would be 'No one who was attacked had eaten watercress.' The converse proposition would be 'Every one who had eaten watercress was attacked by typhoid.' The reverse would be 'No one who had eaten watercress was attacked by typhoid.' "He was not a gouty person, indeed quite the reverse," reminded me of *Punch's* petulant old gentleman—"Hurt myself, Sir? no, Sir, quite the contrary, Sir!"

Desirability and **undesirability**, **undeniability**, etc., are clumsy words, and **reliability** is worse still. *The Times* began an article thus: "'Reliability' has no meaning in English, for there is no such word; in 'motorese' it means," etc., etc.

Develop (for 'manifest,' 'appear,' 'arise,' 'take place,' etc.) is often used for retrograde processes; *e.g.* 'she developed shock' or 'emaciation' (from a well-known textbook) or 'a bed sore'; 'he developed a cavity in the lung,' 'a hemiplegia,' 'a cough,' or 'a rash on the skin.' 'There develops an ashen pallor of the face' comes from an important paper; note also the clumsy indirect form (p. 69). As such processes are of the nature not of development but of degradation, the eye of the mind is put backwards, and not without harm.

Different to, for **different from**. A like error is 'different *than*' (for *other than*); *e.g.* 'They had a different notion of books than their fathers had.' However, in 'different to,' as in 'alien to,' or 'averse to,' it may be argued that the preposition indicates relation only.

Differentiate is now applied to the phases of evolution; it is neither necessary nor desirable to use it for 'distinguish,'

'discriminate,' or 'contrast'; as in 'He differentiated (contrasted) its toxic effects in the rabbit from (with) those it produces in man'; Or again, with less excuse, for *separate*: e.g. 'The fibroid was sharply differentiated (separated) by a thin capsule from the surrounding tissue.'

Disassimilation appears not rarely in our theses: happily the word is not wanted.

Either for 'each' or 'both'; a pestilent and bewildering error: as e.g. 'Tie the vessel on either side (for *both* or *each*) of the place of section.' 'Inject the cocain on either (?) side of the tooth.' 'The pulses are equal at either wrist.' 'If we cut a piece out of the stem of a polyp . . . a head is formed at either end' (both ends? the context did not decide). 'Cut off a small portion at either (each?) end.' 'Thrust in eight or nine needles on either side (both?) of the spine.' 'A tuck must be made at either end of the sheet' (one or both?). 'Air is given by ventilators at either end of the room.' 'To support it a prop may be placed at either side.' 'An electrode is placed on either side of the tragus' (apparently for *each*). Often in such cases the meaning cannot be decided by the context. 'On either side of her walked a guard in military dress' (dodging to and fro?). The necessary *each* seems to be slipping out of use. There is a sense however in which *either* may be used effectively; i.e. when the alternatives are not contemplated together, a diversion of the attention which 'either' may indicate conveniently or picturesquely: e.g. 'As we sailed up this great river a magnificent landscape was spread forth on either side of us (as we gazed, that is, to the right hand or to the left). 'A portrait by Rembrandt, on either side of which are a Ruysdael and a van Goyen,' if equivocal is defensible; and 'On either side of him knelt Margaret and Philibert' is good english. If 'either' be used as one of three or more, the alternatives must be carried forward by repeating 'or.' We shall not say that 'he may take either of three ways'; but that he may take 'either this way, or that, or the other.' For an example of exact use of 'each' and 'either' see quotation (Johnson), p. 84.

Elementary for elemental, and *vice versa*.

Equally with (for 'as well as').

Except (for 'unless'), as in 'except (unless) you want me to.'

Female (for 'woman') *e.g.* *The Lives of the Female Saints* is, speaking generally (in spite of Walter Scott), disagreeably zoological.

Forego (go before) for 'forgo' (go without).

Identical (for 'akin,' etc.), as in the sentence 'We may regard the Highlanders and the Irish as identical,' an absurd but very frequent kind of blunder. In the sentence 'A, B, C, and D, having thus a similar effect, are respectively identical,' the word 'respectively' makes the identity still more disconcerting.

Implicit does not mean unquestioning or absolute (obedience).

Individual, for 'person,' is slovenly unless *single*, or *disconnected*, be required; *e.g.* we rightly distinguish between a crowd and the individuals of whom it consists. 'Comme vous savez, tout ce fait au Palais, et tout dépend de la digestion de deux ou trois individus'; 'that individuals die his will ordains, The propagated species still remains'; in these sentences the use of 'individual' is as correct as it is effective.

The Latter is an ugly clattering word (p. 64) often used idly or perversely. Leslie Stephen¹ calls it 'detestable.' It is used gratuitously where *he* or *it* would suffice: *e.g.* 'He visited the Master in the latter's (his) last days.' The pronoun relates of course to the last previous noun. 'It passes into the ventricle before the contraction of the latter commences' (before *its* contraction begins). 'The gas shell killed all the occupants though the latter (they) wore masks.' English pronouns are indeed elusive, but 'the latter' is very rarely necessary. Still worse is it to use 'the latter' for the *last* of three or more; a very common solecism; and worst of all is it to trail in 'the latter' as a mere trick, even to errors of sense: thus (from a recent paper) 'I asked Dr. X to see the patient with me; this the latter (the patient (?) kindly did.' An eminent historian writes "Ludwig III. succeeded his father as Regent on the latter's death" (!)

To lavage may I think be admitted (on the analogy of

¹ *Studies of a Biographer.*

'to manage,' etc.), but do not write 'I refracted the patient' when you mean that you 'tested the refraction.'

At least when *at most* is required.

Lengthy, an uncouth substitute for **long**. 'This is a lengthy question' (for 'a long inquiry'). Still worse is 'of a protracted nature.' It is also inelegant to say 'lengthened' for 'long,' *e.g.* 'a lengthened period' (for 'a long time'). A lengthened period means an extension of it; as a lease may be lengthened from seven to fourteen years.

Liab**le**: in a passive sense, *e.g.* 'Bronchitis is *liable* to occur' (for 'the patient is *liable* to,' etc.); 'this fungus is *liable* (apt) to cause a blight'; 'his irregular habits are *liable* to injure his business' (see *New English Dictionary*, vi. 235); or again, very absurdly, 'the geological strata most *liable* to cancer,' etc., etc.

To lie and **to lay**: 'He laid (lay) down in his wet clothes,' 'There he laid (lay), sick of a fever,' are instances of vulgar errors which still reappear. To lay is a transitive verb the perfect of which is 'I laid'—*e.g.* an egg. 'The mother overlaid the infant' is correct.

Limited (for few, small, slight, or narrow): *e.g.* we should not write 'a limited acquaintance,' or 'a limited field of vision'; unless limits are, or have been, set; as 'thenceforth his limited ambition was content,' etc. 'The epidemic raged in a limited area' is wrong; but 'By these means the area of its activity was limited' is right. 'Limitations' is not an equivalent of 'limits'; it is an active word.

Moiety does not mean any portion, but one half.

Natural (for 'normal'); *e.g.* 'the heart was natural,' when no one had alleged that it was factitious: unfortunately all disease is 'natural.'

Never (for 'not'). 'I never remember to have seen' means 'I always forget.'

Non—as a negative prefix, if occasionally useful, is too often inept. Where contrast is desired—as in 'nonconformist' or 'nonsense,' it is effective; for a mere negative use the opposite word; as for 'this was a non-operative' . . . read perhaps *neutral*; for 'non-variability,' *invariability* or *constancy*; and so on.

Numerous and **many** deserve more discrimination ; it is better to prefer 'numerous' for subjects consisting of many parts : *e.g.* to speak of many persons but of a numerous crowd.

Obnoxious (for 'noxious').

Often, for in many places.

Only and **alone** (*vide* p. 97). 'Alone' is often used incorrectly for 'only,' and *vice versa* : *e.g.* 'Only my son got a prize' for 'my son alone,' etc. No doubt 'only' and 'alone' may have an almost identical sense, as in 'I only am escaped alone to tell thee' (yet here the 'alone' is not emphatic only, but suggests also a perilous flight). In the next sentence, from a well-written scientific paper, these words accurately reinforce each other : 'It is the *only* reagent by which *alone* the effect can be produced.' 'You alone stood by me' is right—'You only stood by me' suggests that you might have sat down.

Operable is wanted and must be admitted ; but the verb is 'operor.'

Optimistic, when hopeful would be better.

Or and **nor**. In a certain admirably written book I happened to note that the author never used 'nor' in his negative clauses, as neither—nor ; or 'he will not, nor will he,' etc., but always 'or.' This is to break a rule universal unless an alternative is stated ; *e.g.* 'It was not due to this cause *or* that' (correct) ; as also in 'do not warm *or* enlighten me.' 'No verse, no hymn *or* solemn strain.' 'Not in rich furniture *or* fine array, *Nor* in a wedge of gold,' etc. These are correct sentences ; and so are both 'Neither eye nor ear has perceived,' and 'Never was eye, *or* ear, able to perceive.' So again, 'Ye lingered not on Pindus *or* Parnassus' ; and 'Where falls not hail, *or* rain, *or* any snow, *Nor* even winds blow loudly.'

Organisms (short for micro-organisms) is too big a word for bacteria and the like ; a bull is an organism : why not *microbe* ?

Otherwise means not a negative but after another fashion, or in another way. 'The necessity of the step *or* otherwise' is meaningless. 'Their success *or* otherwise,' or 'its presence *or* otherwise' is likewise nonsense. The sentences should run 'their success or failure,' 'its presence or absence.'

Owing to—when no debt should be implied: we say correctly, ‘these changes, owing their origin to,’ etc. It is incorrect to use it instead of ‘as’ or ‘because,’ *e.g.* ‘We use this test *owing to* its being (because it is) simpler.’ ‘Owing to (As) his father being (was) from home.’ So again, ‘Owing to any one who is poor having a claim on hospital accommodation’; and ‘twisted *owing to* (by) the action of fire.’

Paradox. We often read ‘it seems (for *is*) paradoxical to say so.’ Paradox consists in the *seeming*. Paradoxy is not an equivalent of heterodoxy.

Partake. To partake of a meal, etc., is to share it with others, or to take but a portion of it.

Partially—the contrary of impartially—used for *partly*.

Period (for ‘date’ or ‘time’): a period is a certain *course* (of time or motion).

Phenomenal, for ‘wonderful,’ ‘astonishing.’

Practically, for almost, etc.

Predicate (falsely for ‘predict’): as in ‘You may predicate the result of such conduct.’

Preventative, for *preventive*, the better form.

Provided that, for simple *if*.

Regular, as a mere expletive: *e.g.* ‘The operator found himself in a *regular* difficulty.’ ‘The man proved to be a *regular* malingerer.’ ‘Close-fisted as he is, he is a *regular* Cræsus.’ **Simple**—‘he was simply furious’—is a like ineptitude.

Relapse should be used of the patient, not of the disease.

Relationship (for relation): ‘they stood in this peculiar relationship.’ ‘Relationship’ would be needed only in a more abstract sense.

Replace; it is often better to use ‘displace,’ ‘substitute,’ ‘supplant,’ ‘succeed.’ A king may be replaced on his throne, or he may be displaced and succeeded by another. ‘The molars were entirely replaced by a few old stumps’ (for ‘replaced’ read *represented*). ‘She tired of her lover and then replaced him’ (meaning?). By ‘we must replace the decayed stone,’ what did the architect mean? And what about ‘a *loss* hard to replace’?

Requires ; mis-used as follows : 'The surgeon *requires* to be careful' (for 'it is required of the surgeon,' or, still better, 'the surgeon *must be* careful'); 'This knife *requires* to be (must be) kept for cutting onions'; 'The films *require* to be examined under a high power.'

Rudimentary, in the sense of 'degraded' or 'vestigial.'

Several, merely for some ; with no sense of each.

Similar, for *same*, e.g. 'we make a similar charge.'

Singular, or **unique** (for 'rare' or 'notable'), is a blunder—e.g. 'these are rather unique' ; so are **extreme** (for 'much' or 'considerable'), '**very perfect**,' '**most ideal**,' etc.

Small and **little**, and many other such common words which cannot be severally cited, should not be used indiscriminately ; e.g. we speak of a small parish but of a little lad.

So—as usually implies a difference ; **as**—as a likeness.

Sometimes, when some *places* is meant, e.g. 'the turf is sometimes rich sometimes poor.' So **always** is too often used for everywhere ; see also '**Often**.'

Such is improper in 'I do not believe in such' ; 'he is much addicted to such.' 'It was unhappy that such was not done' (this by a severe critic).

Sufficiently frequently, an ugly phrase for 'often enough.'

Superior to (for 'better than').

Surroundings in ordinary cases is not a pretty substitute for 'circumstances.' 'In my **then** circumstances,' and 'in his **seldom** use of it,' are slovenly prose.

Than (for 'when'). 'I had scarcely turned my back *than* he fell back in a fit.'

Together with and **in addition to** (for 'and,' 'besides,' 'moreover,' 'furthermore,' etc.), if not wrong are tiresomely frequent.

Transpire (for 'happen').

Traumatism (for 'trauma,' both somewhat pedantic words) ; traumatism is the condition produced by the 'trauma.'

Veracity is not truth but the faculty of truthfulness. We speak of a veracious person, but of a proposition as valid or true.

Verbal (for 'oral'): *e.g.* 'a verbal (oral) message'; a written message is still verbal.

Without (for 'unless'): *e.g.* 'I was not to go without (unless) my mother gave me leave.' *Without*—for 'without taking into consideration,' or 'not to mention'—is a vexatious use, increasing of late. It is too elliptical. The following sentence from a thoughtful but unskilful writer puzzled me for some minutes: 'It is hard enough for the modern artist to paint a naked body accurately *without* putting his own dreams and passions into it: Michael Angelo did this.' Michael Angelo painted the body without putting his dreams and passions into it! At last we guess that by 'without' the author meant *without taking into consideration*—'let alone,' as we sometimes say. Thus 'to paint the body accurately, not to consider putting,' etc., would read clearly enough.

It is no misuse nor solecism (as is often alleged) to make a compound word, such as *unconsciousness*, from two languages: such an objection to 'appendicitis,' for example, is not to be pressed; for 'itis' is an affix, as is 'ly' (like) in English, which is regularly attached to words of Latin or Greek origin, as in 'divinely,' 'grammatically.' Indeed, a contrary rule would mutilate our language. I have referred to the different meanings of *remissness* and *remission*, *devoutness* and *devotion*, *distinctness* and *distinction*, *diffuseness* and *diffusion*, and so forth. It is customary to say *inequality*, but *unequal*. So, 'ism,' a Greek termination, is properly affixed to words of sundry origin. But the dealer in veterinary medicines who advertises 'blacklegoids' is too audacious.

Some specimens of *tumid*, *affected*, or *superfine language* may be quoted as too frequent in our theses: 'Prior to' or 'previously to' (for 'before'); as, 'I had not seen him previously'; 'previously to,' or 'prior to' the paper being read—for *before it was read*; 'the week subsequent' for 'the week after'; 'that is his method of procedure' (said not

of a laboratory process, or the like, but for 'that is his way'); 'the patient *experienced* (felt, or suffered from) a pain in his side'; 'his strength *was reduced to a vast extent*.' So 'eventuate' (for 'issue' or 'ensue'), and 'literature' (for 'scientific records' or 'papers'). Other diffuse or vulgar phrases are: 'Care was exercised to prevent'; 'the patient's psychology was eccentric'; 'the individual in question' (for 'this person'); 'the majority of individuals' (for 'most persons'); 'utilise' (for 'use'); 'materialised' (for 'happened' or 'took place'); 'it is contemplated to undertake' (for 'we think of doing') and so on. A certain Government office is said still to shudder on the recollection of the crudity of one of its clerks who wrote, 'I do not think we can decide at present' instead of 'What further steps should be taken with a view to securing that the duties devolving upon him should be duly performed in the future will be for the consideration of the Board.' In a thesis before me the candidate writes, 'And I should sustain the metabolic processes of the individual,' which would have served had he referred to idiosyncrasy; but the writer meant no more than 'I would feed the patient carefully.' A recent grotesque example was 'the medicine assisted the patient to pay homage to the goddess Cloacina.' I earnestly advise the student to examine all technical jargon suspiciously, and to avoid it where he can, especially in "psychology."

The truth is, when a young writer sets himself to literary work he is often misled by a false notion

of composition. That in the first place he shall fill his mind with as much experience as he has been able to gather, and that before taking up his pen he shall dwell in thought upon his matter a while, until his subject projects itself in clear outline, we are all agreed; thus far he does well (pp. 32, 187). But when he takes pen in hand he seeks 'highly educated phrases and words' instead of taking a bee-line to his object. The tiro conceives that, to express himself effectively, he must fetch words from afar, and weave them into highly complex webs — Augustine's *verba locutionis anfractuosa*. Timidity becomes 'psychological apprehension'; 'secures its patency remaining intact' is preferred to *keeps it open*; 'deploring the fact that it did not commence at an earlier date' (for 'regretting it did not begin sooner'); 'the pressure will result in its being stretched' ('the pressure will stretch it'); 'it is localised to the immediate vicinity' (for 'it is seated very near'); 'the sitting height is measured from the apex of the skull to any flat surface on which the individual may be sitting' (say 'to the bench'). This sentence, on a case of mental disease, is amazing rubbish: "Owing to the difficulty experienced by the individual in making a satisfactory adjustment to certain environmental factors." But if with candour and simplicity (*simplicité* not *simplesse*¹) the student will meditate on his

¹ "Beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity,—I mean the true simplicity of a rightly and nobly ordered mind and character, not that other simplicity which is only a euphemism for folly."—PLATO, *Rep.* 400 c.

garnered material, it will build itself without hands in the forms of his own temperament. "It is true," said Johnson, "that Sir Thomas Browne used uncommon words and expressions, but we must consider that he had uncommon sentiments." In Carlyle's words: "Just say what you think, but find out first just what you think, if that be practicable" (see pp. 32, 141)—words reminiscent of those of the great Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste: *Ki ben penze ben peut dire.*

Every now and then some enterprising journalist starts a new word, or phrase, which is caught up by all the rest who, correctly or incorrectly, toss it from paragraph to paragraph to utter weariness. Are we not sick of the 'acid test'? A while ago 'meticulous' had the run—no article was without it; then 'weird' came up, and 'psychological moment': 'mentality' is become smarter than 'mind,' and the ugly vapid word 'envisage' is in favour. A fop has now started 'mentalisation,' and it may take! 'Forceful' has for the moment supplanted *forcible*, and 'disharmony' *discord*—though the 'dish' sound is not nice. But at last we really are getting rid of the 'knees of the gods'—that 'vast parcel office.' We are all at the moment for 'clarity,' yet of serene lucidity is not the spondee more suggestive? e.g. 'This present life is night in regard of the clearness to come.'¹

¹ Our foreign words, crudely dragged in, are pronounced with a strange perversity: e.g. as in *cinema*, *parade*, *clonus*, etc., the penultimate is short, too often we make it long; as in *kinema*, *medina*, etc., it is long, too often we shorten it; we say *diphtheria* and *venereal*, but *aesthetic*, *carotid*, and so on.

When we talk of 'objective truth' we talk of course of what cannot be. The material must go through the factory and, as our factories are different, the produce cannot be the same in all. The writer who deals only in products from other factories interests us less; even in science the personal factor is welcome. However young then the essayist may be, having looked abroad first, let him then look within. Let him not search afield for long and complicated forms and elaborated words, nor for large and decorated vestures; if he can get well home on his ideas the simplest and closest words are best. Let him consider not how finely, but how plainly and directly he can express himself. We all know the tangle in which a sentence or a paragraph may involve itself, and how then we beat our brains for farther and farther fetched expressions. But this is the time to fall back upon the plainest and homeliest words, when we shall see better what is wanting; often what was wanting was just simplicity itself (pp. 38, 138). If the essayist, stripping off all encumbrance, will look nearer home for his words, and put these together concisely, the figure of his thought will move more freely in the lighter drapery.

In "style," the sense of effort is felt more when the fabric of words is out of proportion to the staple of the thought or picture. Where, as in Sir Thomas Browne, the substance is rich, arduous architecture of words may be fitting, and indeed memorable. Milton's great phrase is laborious, but it supports the vast compass of his imagination.

Still, what word-mongery can surpass such various effects as these, where the words are of the very simplest ?

. . . Boundless intemperance
In nature is a tyranny ; it hath been
The untimely emptying of the happy throne
And fall of many kings.

Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou south ; blow
upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.

Let's make medicines of our great revenge, To cure this
deadly grief.

Horribly stuffed with epithets of war.
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.
Blasts that blow the poplar white.
An ass hath need of all his trappings.

How is it these simple words are so telling ?
Because the thought which informs them is vivid,
complete, and concise ; it arises in the central
abiding-place of the personal life, the innermost
source of its expression. I must illustrate further
the energy, the beauty, and the poignancy, which
animate the simplest words, if they express this
personal note.

He lifted up his shining sword and stroke him so main a
blow as therewithal his head clave asunder ; so that he fell
stark to the ground.

Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars !

O he's gane down to yon shore side,
As fast as he could fare ;
He saw fair Annie in the boat,
But the wind it tossed her sair.

“And hey Annie, and how Annie !
O Annie, winna ye bide !”
But aye the mair he cried ‘Annie,
The braider grew the tide.

Fine thoughts are not to be caught by fine words ; it is true that the artlessness of the ballad cannot be recaptured, but by its example we may recover something of its virtue.

Certain latin finery is often put on, and not rarely with false meanings ; of such are ‘*vera causa*,’ ‘*crux*,’ ‘*a priori*,’ etc. ‘*A priori*’ does not mean ‘at first sight’ ; nor does it mean ‘without special knowledge’ : it signifies a certain method of reasoning which a student is better without. ‘*Crux*’ does not mean a conundrum, nor an impediment, nor a difficulty, nor a ‘cross-roads,’ nor again a crisis or perplexity ; still less an affliction. Yet an able publicist called the miners’ “national pool” a ‘*crux*,’ and used the same word for the miners’ and the masters’ dispute. A sick club may be the cross, but not the ‘*crux*’ of its physician. By a ‘*crux*’ Bacon, from whom it is quoted, meant a signpost, and by ‘a crucial instance’ an arm of it. What he meant by *vera causa* it is not easy to say precisely ; but he certainly did not mean efficient or proximate or sole cause. So far as philosophers use the phrase, it is in the sense of a cause capable of producing or consistent with some such effect, but one either not known to have preceded the particular effect, or inadequate to the full consequences : treacherous ground, even for philosophers. *E.g.* the rotation of the earth

may be called a *vera causa* of the wash of a river against one of its banks, though its contribution to this effect may be inappreciable. Not rarely in our theses it is associated with the phrase '*causa causans*,' which, again, is a useless rag of medieval dialectic sometimes taken to signify a *conditio sine qua non*, sometimes an immediate cause, sometimes The First Cause. Indeed, we must be shy of the use of 'Cause' in the singular number, even for the convenience of discussion; we must not forget that every event in any series is itself the apex of an infinite cone of causes.

Instances of a still more ignorant use of latin are: 'He is a person of no little *locus standi*; *per se*' (for alone): e.g. 'He was suffering from bronchitis *per se*'; '*seriatim*' (for seriously): e.g. 'But *seriatim*, my dear Grove, *seriatim*!' Other scraps of latin such as '*fons et origo*' are often used grotesquely if not erroneously: e.g. 'the *fons et origo* was a tape-worm'; or 'this site of infection was the *fons et origo* of the illness'—the site may have been a *fons*, but hardly the *origo*. '*Cui bono*?' does not mean 'What's the good?' but 'To whom goes the advantage?' I have a few more florets culled not from theses only: e.g. '*contraria contrariis*'; '*non omnis moribor*'; '*a data*'; '*tympani*' (by a considerable author); '*polypi*' (frequent); '*octopi*'; '*scybalae*'; '*empyematas*.' '*Trypanosomae*' appeared six times in an important review in *Brit. Med. Journ.*, February 25, 1905. I have seen '*foliae*' in print: and so forth. And why use dog latin forms such as 'non-dependence' (for

‘independence’) ‘non-effective,’ etc. ? ‘Nocuous,’ for ‘noxious,’ may be defensible, but surely ‘anoci-’ (for ‘innoci-’) is a careless adoption. We often read, as metaphor, that messengers were sent ‘*in partibus infidelium*’ (as if to convert them), a prevalent error I have never seen corrected. Yet in this sense ‘*partibus*’ should be ‘*partes*.’ By a bishop *in partibus infidelium* was signified not an evangelist, but a bishop taking his title from a people so insignificant, so remote, or so faithless that he might stay at his ease in Rome. Why drag in phrases from languages unknown to the writer, only to corrupt them ?

Tautology.—A notion is prevalent in genteel academies, and is in some favour among authors, that the repetition of a leading word or words in a sentence, or short period, constitutes an offence called ‘tautology.’ In this sense of tautology the mathematician might incur censure for the repetition of symbols in an equation. If the word first accepted be precisely the word wanted, to vary it is to vary the sense, to confuse the argument, and to vex the reader. Never let us use two words for one thing, nor, save in jest, let one word instantly suggest two things, as in a well-known author, ‘The boys walked away from the *cricket* nets (at sunset) when . . . the first *but* cheeped’ ; again, we read ‘The subject presented itself to me in another *form* . . . in this *way*,’ etc. ; here the reader, who has been prepared for a form, is thus confronted unexpectedly with a path. So ‘glucose’ may be used in one sentence

and 'dextrose' in the next. In another tautophobic paper I was bothered to read that 'The sign *x* marks the *beginning* of, . . . *y* marks the *commencement* of, . . . *z* the *occurrence* of,' etc., etc. In another, 'it *originated* . . . ' was followed by 'it *began* . . . and so on. . . ' And once more—"In the first series the reaction was *present* on 37 *occasions*, in the second series it *occurred* 32 *times*, while in the third it *was observed* in 27 *instances*"—here, for the same form of proposition, both the words and the order of clauses are irritatingly wayward. In a summary before me three different verbs—'ended,' 'terminated,' 'concluded'—are used in three consecutive clauses, but all with the same meaning. To avoid 'tautology' thus is to become confusing and tiresome. Above all things intolerable is what Henry Sidgwick used to call 'the ornate alias'; as 'that sacred edifice,' 'the succulent bivalve,' 'His Satanic Majesty,' 'gentlemen of the long robe,' 'femoral habiliments,' 'the finny denizens of the deep'; and so forth. 'The cornute adornment of an ox' was not a joke; it appeared recently in an essay in a literary magazine.

Moreover, as a literary offence, tautology means, not the return of a particular word in its proper place, but an idle reiteration of meaning, a recurrent superfluity of idea, thought, or word ('pleonasm'), any repetition whatsoever which is ineffectual. Reiteration may be a means of supreme effect, as 'Quietly shining to the quiet moon'; or 'πόνος πόνω πόνον φέρει' (*Ajax*, 866), or again, as Mark Antony's 'For Brutus is an honourable man'

—a tremendous tautology. Consider this useful instance: ‘That the Gothic architecture of Venice *had arisen out of, and indicated in all its features* a state of pure national faith and of domestic virtue; and that its Renaissance architecture *had arisen out of, and in all its features indicated* a state of,’ etc., etc. Here, by keeping to the very words, emphasis, precision and sequence are gained; but by the inversion in the second clause monotony is avoided. The iteration which disfigures not scientific papers only but also the larger part of public writing and speaking, is such gratuitous tautology as ‘It gives me great pleasure (and satisfaction)’; ‘to it (alone) I shall confine myself’; ‘he was a man of great resolution (and determination)’; ‘mutual reciprocation’; ‘actual facts’; ‘hardly (sufficiently) completely (and certainly) known’; ‘real actuality’; ‘we are (both) agreed’; ‘the smallest possible (minimum)’; ‘failure (and loss of power)’; ‘this noble (and magnificent) edifice’; ‘the substance had become (hard and) indurated’; ‘the glitter of weapons and the flash of arms’; ‘the noiseless (and inaudible) foot of Time’; ‘it is (owing) to this that the appearance is due’; ‘an (unfounded) calumny’; ‘(hot and) burning words’; ‘(fervid) zeal’; ‘singularly unique’; ‘fantastic fancies’; ‘heaps (and mounds) of facts’; ‘surrounding circumstances’; ‘lonely isolation’; ‘(very) extremely’; ‘(very) superior’; ‘more capital will be necessary, but less skill (will be required)’; ‘it is found (to be present) in (localised) places, such as the cheek’; ‘The

(old) veteran showed both magnanimity (of mind) and equanimity (of disposition)'; 'The disease is often (an) epidemic (one in many instances)'; 'A (universal) *panacea* for (all) evils.' 'As a rule it will be invariably found.' 'It was (want of) imagination that failed him.' I take from a paper before me, one almost unreadable yet with much fertile matter in its muddy stream, 'In consequence of a large rural population in (contra-)distinction to an urban one'; a clumsy redundancy for 'a population mainly rural.' Some distinguished authors, rhetorical authors especially such as those of the seventeenth century, are prone to tautology: *e.g.* 'Infinite riches and plenty, a redundancy and overflowing fulness' (Cudworth). Southey resents the passage, 'The key my loose powerless fingers forsook' for 'I dropt the key.' 'The sick man disliked questions and disturbance.' In rhetoric, it is true, some redundancy may be a virtue. Gladstone's style was redundant, yet tautology was not one of its faults; his sentences were often heavy with adjectives, but not as useless burdens; every expletive carried its own weight (p. 103). Burke, with more genius, was in this kind of subtlety below Gladstone; Gladstone would have been incapable of saying '(fat) stupidity and (gross) ignorance'; wherein neither adjective pays its way; nor would Gladstone or Bright have talked of 'bowing down the (stubborn) neck of their pride (and ambition) to the yoke'; or of 'working from dawn to dark in the innumerable servile (degrading), unseemly (unmanly), and often

(most unwholesome and) pestiferous occupations.' Suspend in such passages every word which does not tell, and note how much, as written prose at any rate, the sentence is lightened and strengthened; how much more nervous it becomes! If in adjectives redundancy is most frequent (p. 103), yet nouns substantive offend also. In 'his conduct provoked neither comment nor censure,' two emphatic nouns overlap. In poetry, where emotion is highly strung, we are very exacting: in the line 'This was thy wisdom, this thy glorious work,' we perceive that these predicates jostle each other. Horace Walpole demurred to the tautology of 'loftiness and majesty.' The impressiveness of repetition is much more skilfully attained by changing the phrase so as to set it in another light; and if the second clause be otherwise constructed it is still more effective, thus:

The heathen are come into thy inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled, and made Jerusalem a heap of stones. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat to the fowls of the air; and the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the land. Their blood have they shed like water on every side of Jerusalem, and there was no man to bury them.

Here is iteration and reiteration; but on each return the idea comes back charged with a new and more awful intensity (*vide* 'Emphasis,' p. 156). To enable us to realise the intensity of this description some part of it might be translated, let us say into the language of the war correspondent of a daily newspaper.

If it is in imaginative or rhetorical prose and verse, rather than in scientific writing, that successive clauses may be charged with accumulating strength or variety, yet in scientific writing there may be a place for persuasion as well as for force and precision. Not mere iteration then, but iteration without gathering of energy or variety of meaning, is the tautology we have to avoid. It seems often a little hard to cut out words which, as we wrote them, seemed to be happy and effective (p. 173), but which on revision we perceive to be out of proportion, misplaced, exuberant, dissonant, or otiose; yet we must be each of us his own severest master. *E.g.* in this sentence, 'Then we were surrounded by a beautiful *mist* or *atmosphere* of sound,' the accomplished author should have sacrificed one of the words in italics. One of the first principles of all the arts is economy of materials. It is easier to say in twenty words what might be said better in ten (p. 14).

The Woolly Style.—Frequently however it is to a litter of idle words that slackness of form is due (*vide* pp. 29 and 146-7): such litter as this, 'they have made up their minds as to what was the true method'; 'the question which now arises then is this'; '*as to* how'; 'it is a much disputed point as to whether' (for 'it is disputable'); '*as to*' for 'of' or 'or,' *e.g.*, 'his notions *as to* his duty'; 'his explanations *as to* why' (a Government paper); 'it remains to be seen in how far'; 'having regard to the fact that,' or 'from the fact that' (for '*as*'); 'this depends upon the fact that'; or again 'from

the fact that owing to' or 'is accounted for by the fact that'—(for *because*); 'in spite of the fact that' (for *although*); 'with reference to'; 'in this connection'; 'the question as to the meaning of the theory as to the involvement of'; 'no doubt it will be able to be got rid of'; 'will lead to a correct conclusion (being made)'; 'if such a property of matter can be conceived (of)'; 'quite the whole of it,' or 'quite entirely,' 'more preferable'; 'the smallest possible minimum'; 'the possibilities that may arise'; 'inevitably necessary'; 'exact precision'; 'they are closely connected (with one another)'; 'tend to lead to'; 'the more frequent(ly) the attacks (occur)'; 'there was noticed to be impairment of resonance'; 'we found (that there was) an increase of acidity'; 'to which there may be added some pain'; 'are impossible (of being performed)'; 'yet it does not follow that it is impossible to' (for 'it may nevertheless'); 'this palsy prevents the adduction of the vocal cords (being brought about)'; 'he was attacked with asthma immediately on coming into the proximity of a cat'; 'an error is being fallen into'; 'but there is a lot of doubt attached to this'; 'there has been put forward the theory (for it has been supposed); 'his position was by no means (of an) enviable (character)' 'wine of a light character' (for 'a light wine'); 'in case of a relapse (occurring)'; 'he adopted the recumbent position'; 'after this encouragement he set to with renewed courage'; 'who in many cases will' (many of whom will); 'they become more and more eliminated (for, fewer

and fewer); 'regurgitation back again'; 'later *on*' (on what? a confusion with *farther on*—of time with place); 'he put us *off on* to a wrong path'; '*in* between,' and '*at* between'; '*at* about this time'; 'divided *off*' or '*up*'; 'follow *upon*'; 'trained *up* to'; 'to admit *of* a bougie'; '*out* of the six cases there were four'; and so on, to infinity. The phrase 'signed up for' is adopted in a recent university report. 'Rather' is often redundant: *e.g.* 'it is better to give it up (rather) than to do it unskilfully.' 'It is more becoming to speak frankly (rather) than to elude inquiry.' The redundancy of *ands*, *buts*, *whiles*, *since*s—the bacteria of language—often gives a flabby form to writing otherwise good: *e.g.* 'Sometimes we hear of this as present, (and) sometimes as absent' (*vide* 'Punctuation,' p. 178). A semicolon will save many a weak 'and' between two clauses. Where 'ands' are recurrent they may be spared by linkages, thus: 'Truth and justice, religion and piety,' etc. 'The blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear.'¹ Yet where 'and' or 'both' is wanted do not shy at 'tautology' so as to drag in 'while' or 'whilst.' The time quality of this word should always be observed. *E.g.* do not write 'He lived there till 1895, *whilst* his widow survived till 1914'; nor 'Patients frequent this resort in *summer*, *while* in *winter* they visit the other'; nor 'Tom takes tea while Mary takes coffee' (insert comma instead of 'while'). Of useless expletives, 'with regard to,' 'real,' and 'actual' are

¹ The punctuation is from the Greek text.

perhaps the most frequent: *e.g.* 'this was the (real) beginning of the story'; 'when (in reality) he had not spit blood'; 'during an (actual) attack'; '(the actual) death took place from exhaustion'; 'such was the (actual) cause' (here such an adjective as 'remote,' 'proximate,' or 'immediate,' may have been required, but too often such words are mere padding). The following sentence is very flabby, redundant, and inaccurate:

'Or a theory has been believed (in), and a cause assumed (to act), when (in reality) there was little or no evidence of its presence; (and) scrofula has thus been treated, and considered causal in many cases where scientific evidence is wanting. Or an assumption, as of a scrofulous element, has been made of which there was no proof.'

And consider this one about early breakfast: 'Difficulties are often associated with domestic facilities of obtaining food early in the morning'; a 'dropsical style' indeed, yet from a leading medical work. Or again: 'in which case there also naturally tends to be a defective using up,' etc. This is indeed the 'woolly style.'

Furthermore, padding is often mischievous as well as superfluous, as with adverbs falsely used; such as 'certainly,' 'constantly,' 'undoubtedly,' 'absolutely,' 'therefore,' 'of course,' 'perfectly,' and the like, when indeed certainty, constancy, proof, perfection may be remote enough. Some expletives in common use are always wrong, such as 'most constant' (as if one should say 'more square' or 'more circular'). "Gastric ulcer is a disease *constantly* associated with hæmatemesis; in some cases, however, there has

been no hæmatemesis," is a sentence which should have run thus, "In gastric ulcer hæmatemesis is frequent but not constant." But the art of elimination must grow up together with the art of construction. Think of the selection and concentration in 'a bundle of rags with a cough in it' (said of an Irish beggar); or 'magnifice sapientiam tractavit' (of Bossuet); or again 'iratos regum apices.' But in this quality latin stands supreme.

The early repetition of the same word in a different sense, as of a different word for the same sense, is a very vexatious tautology: *e.g.* 'This effect is relatively easy to effect'; but its ineptitude is too apparent to need illustration.

Emphasis.—Tautology is then a dissolution of emphasis; writers who distrust their own skill are wont therefore to mark emphatic words or phrases by underscoring (*italics*). In handbills, letters of business, and the like, this device may serve; indeed it may be needed, if not for the weakness of the writer, for the carelessness of the reader. Or *italics* may properly be used for axioms, or subdivisions. In formal prose however it is a poor compliment to the reader to suppose him either lacking in intelligence, or unworthy of pains; for, with the pains which are due to him, you can drive your main purposes home by purely literary devices, as a conjurer 'forces' a card. This end may be gained as follows: by placing emphatic or leading or happy words at or near the beginning or the end of the sentence or clause; by breaking the customary order of the words; by repetition; by suspension;

by summary; by using some choice or obsolescent word—for a not unfamiliar word in an obsolescent sense is free from affectation, if the mark be hit—by the use of the subjunctive mood when doubt is to be emphatic; by cadence, especially if the emphasis is to be carried by the clause rather than by a word of it; by alliteration or assonance; by reiteration—a method much, perhaps too much, affected by Matthew Arnold—or even by elusion of reiteration; by epigram; and lastly, a subtle and effective way, by some inversion of order of expression in a foregoing similar clause. There may be other devices; I have not gone beyond my own somewhat haphazard notes and these may suffice. Whoso can use these means well can use all.

I offer a few examples of these devices.

Emphasis by position of word in clause (p. 153). The reader may turn to many an example in the former parts of this book: *e.g.* p. 92, and elsewhere.

By order of words. ‘True it is’; ‘die he must’; ‘silver and gold have I none;’ ‘if go you must.’ ‘If you spend the day fruitfully you will rejoice in the evening’ is a bad order, as the cardinal words hang behind. Compare this with the original (latin) order, ‘Vespere gaudebis si diem fructuose expendas,’ and note the gain; the time comes first, according to the rule of syntax (time first, place second); the joy, which is emphatic, comes early; next the doubt on which hangs the joy, and with it the time of the next clause; finally the main condition on which the joy is to be had.

By choice word or choice sense of a word. ‘After this obstreperous welcome, and this equivocal display, such friendly tones were indeed *grateful*’ (note also the gain of a minor emphasis by repetition of ‘this’). ‘Beside these higher considerations such an argument as that appears in its just *impertinence*.’ ‘This I will maintain before my adversaries, all and *several*.’ ‘Who might, instead of being the benefactor of mankind, be its *bane*.’ ‘He knew better than to cast off those *gyves*.’ ‘Thus already the new agriculture is growing *hoar*.’ ‘Expressive silence alone could *muse* his praise.’ ‘The minster is a great *habitable* of birds.’ “Doth not the ear try words even as the palate tasteth its meat?” But, lest it savour of affectation, this device must be sparingly used.

Emphasis by the subjunctive is the stronger as the use of the subjunctive becomes less frequent: ‘This assuredly he will do, if he survive her.’ ‘Whereby I might not call myself as wholesome a morsel for the worms as any.’

Emphasis by rhythm (p. 169), *cadence*, *gentle surprise*, or *epigram*. ‘The Stoick is in the right. He forgets that he can die, who complains of misery: we are in the power of no calamity while death is in our own.’ ‘Time is an antagonist which is subject to no casualties.’ “How little my love of them would serve me when the silence of lawn and woods in the dews of morning should be completed; and all my thoughts should be of those whom, by neither, I was to meet more.” The cadence here becoming suddenly spondaic, brings

pause and contemplation. Change 'more' into 'again,' and this quality is lost. -

Till said to Tweed,
'Thōugh ȝe rīn wi' spēd,
And I rīn slāw,
Whar ȝe droon ae man,
I drōon t̄wā.'

'Keeping the buttercups sō lōng wāitīng.' May I venture to insert one example from our masters the Greeks?

Ἡμὲν ἐμαρνάσθην ἔριδος πέρι θυμοβόροιο
Ἡδ' αὖτ' ἐν φιλότῳ διέτμαγεν ἄρθμῆσαντε.¹
Iliad vii. 301-2.

Note the tumult of the first line, and the peaceful spondees which close the second. Muse upon this sentence from one of Cranmer's Collects: "Grant, we beseech thee, O mērcifūl Lōrd, tō thȳ fāithfūl ēoplē, pārdōn ānd pēace," in which the subtle alliteration aids the impression of the rhythm ending in rest.

Emphasis by alliteration and assonance also is already illustrated by two of these examples. (See p. 175.)

Emphasis by repetition hardly needs examples; this well-known mode enters into every effective essay or oration (p. 145). *E.g.* "We shall not implicate ourselves in the *ordinary* concerns of Europe, nor in its *ordinary* collisions and enmities." (George Washington). 'There is none that doeth good, no not one.'

¹ 'They fought furiously, but were reconciled and parted friends.'

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone ;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

An adroit method is a manifest evasion of reiteration : *e.g.* 'There are fungi which have well-marked tints, but the Latin names of these agarics are not pleasant';—by eluding 'fungi' on the return and substituting 'agarics' emphasis is attained; as also by an ironical pleasantry on the academic names. A like example is to be seen on p. 159 in Sir Thomas Browne's contrast of 'brain' with 'crany'.

Emphasis by humour or irony is more difficult : *e.g.* 'Shelley took lodgings at York, under the shadow of what Shelley calls that "gigantic-pile of superstition" the Minster; . . . but Hogg's society made the Minster endurable'; 'I am a conservative, conservatism I repudiate' (p. 163); 'Do not take it *au tragique*, be a little insincere in your sincerity.' Irony, however, needs a very light and practised hand; and young writers may do well to restrain the use of it.

Emphasis by suspension would need longer quotations than I can afford; see, for example, p. 85. Yet here is one more, 'habes tota quod mente petisti, Infelix!'

Emphasis by summary is to be seen in the force of a short sentence at the close of a long paragraph: the reader will find examples of this mode from Mr. Bryce and Henry Sidgwick (p. 74).

Finally, sometimes, a refined and grateful emphasis may be conveyed in the cherishing of a sentence or paragraph. Speaking generally, we would not see the labour of the file; but if, now and then, when the matter is worthy of it, by a nice handling of a word or the turn of a phrase the author betrays pleasure and quiet alertness in his task, the reader is pleasurably affected. A candidate writes 'bad air and scanty food dispose to tuberculosis,' and I am interested; for the parrot candidate always writes '*predispose*.'

Emphasis by punctuation (*vide* p. 180).

Obviously, the converse is true that stress must not fall upon a weak word or syllable—such as a secondary pronoun or adjective, or a preposition (pp. 87-8). Commonly, therefore, we end the sentence with a verb, which is nearly always a strong and animated word (see p. 102 and 'Accent,' p. 177). Beware of false emphasis by brocading a secondary clause: *e.g.* 'What couple of books were (was?) found in Shelley's pocket when they found him *strewn like a weed* on the sands of Lerici . . . Keats and Sophocles.' Passing by the two 'found,' the words 'strewn like a weed,' have, it is true, the merit of vision (pp. 32 and 187); but the emphasis was to be laid not on the death but on the books, which are thus put into the shade.

Finally, remember that emphasis is not so much for facts as for opinions and ideas.

Metaphor.—'As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in a fool's mouth'; yet, as we have seen, metaphor is so

intimate a function of language that to try to avoid it is to try to avoid one's shadow. Few words in the stream of language have been rolled quite smooth—none perhaps (p. 99). With the broken lights of some of these gems the artist in language lays in cunningly his tints for rare and various reflections; he may compare a lewd woman's eyes to 'the cruel spiders with their crafty ginnies.'

As with an opposite cunning the scientific craftsman may seek purer and austerer lines, yet, analyse and distil his words as he may, their subtler virtues and reminiscences will play upon his prose in spite of himself; though open metaphor, he may, and usually will, avoid.

Of the metaphorical without open metaphor the following is an example: "In our study of anatomy there is a mass of mysterious philosophy, and such as reduced the very heathens to divinity; yet, amongst all those rare discoveries and curious pieces I find in the fabrick of man, I do not so much content myself, as in that I find not; that is, no organ or instrument for the rational soul; for in the brain, which we term the seat of reason, there is not anything of moment more than I can discover in the crany of a beast." This well-known passage is in quality more metaphorical than the following into which metaphor is deliberately imported: "It would seem as if the different impulses met in their courses with an unwonted resistance to their progress, as if the wheels of the cerebral machinery worked stiffly, so that the lesser shocks of molecular change which otherwise

would have moved them, were broken and wasted upon them.”¹

A literal sentence may thus have an imaginative value as rich as the rarest metaphor could give it: *e.g.* “The grateful devotion of the Flavian family placed the monogram of Christ in the midst of the ensigns of Rome.”

Concerning covert metaphor then, which clings to nearly all our parts of speech, we shall be choice and vigilant; for the shortest metaphorical expressions may land us in such false phrases as ‘this was *pandering* to red tape’; ‘the weather at —— *discarded* its habitual inclemency’; ‘he failed to *grasp* a *view* of the subject’; ‘this *view* has received some very *hard blows* (a ‘view’ should suggest survey); ‘*events* were on the *wing*’; ‘the very *centre* and *hinge* of the matter’; ‘to eradicate the stamp’; ‘worm-eaten by rats’; ‘the pearl of table waters’; ‘barricades in sheep’s clothing’; ‘to illuminate perplexities’; ‘at the cross-roads’ (for at the parting of the ways); and (but the other day by a popular author) ‘a Utopian will-o’-the-wisp.’ We remember Samuel Johnson’s sarcastic comment on ‘not one link shall be left to clank upon our limbs’—‘Sir, one link cannot clank.’ In very few words we may bring in much false metaphor: *e.g.* ‘The germ, the dawn, of a new vein of literature’; or, again, a metaphor

¹ This sentence is taken from Foster’s *Physiology*, a work which I propose to the scientific writer for his imitation. Even though its matter be belated, it should continue, like Watson’s and Paget’s *Lectures*, to be a model of scientific style, with the virtues of both renunciation and exposition.

may be out of value: *e.g.* 'silence deep as death' is too solemn for any moment less than impending battle.

Even in the phrase of great writers metaphors are too often forced; they do not think (as I have counselled on pp. 187 and 32) under the form of visual conception: *e.g.* Burke spoke of Windsor Castle as a 'temple and fortress standing inviolate upon the brow of the British Lion'; an awkward vision.¹ If Burke's great thoughts are in expression too often turgid and diffuse, we must remember that they were delivered in oration, not as prose. De Quincey's exorbitances, which are prose, not oration, are less admirable. From the page of an accomplished but more measured author I will take a passage which I venture notwithstanding to regard as false in metaphor: "The bright crystal laws of life endure like pointer stars, guiding a traveller's eye to the celestial pole by which he steers." On revision, 'by which he steers' should be deleted; for, if not pleonastic, at any rate it trails too much (p. 83), and the alliteration of *steers* and *stars* is without gain; but the main animadversion is that the processes of life are hardly comparable with those of crystals.

Furthermore, metaphors must be used with a sense of unity and of relative values, lest literal be mingled with figurative clauses, and erroneous,

¹ As I could not rid myself of some suspicion of this quotation, I compared it as it stands in a modern edition of Burke, with a much earlier text, when I discovered that 'Lion' is a perennial misprint for Zion—a very different image. I leave it in the text as a curiosity of error.

grotesque, or vulgar associations creep in: *e.g.* 'Boyle was the father of philosophy, and the brother of the Earl of Cork.' Or again, Burke's conjunction of 'the watch and ward of the proud keep of Windsor, the crown of England, and the solemn order of all Estates and Dignities of the realm,' with the security of the Duke of Bedford (Letter to a Noble Lord). Finally, to use metaphor with imperfect knowledge is apt to lead to 'howlers,' such as, 'He found he had created a Frankenstein'; or, 'The minister's servant was the scapegoat who had caused all this trouble.'

As writers in science then we shall be chary of overt metaphor, though for liveliness, point, or brevity we shall use it now and then; as in this of Lord Orrery: 'Lord Thomond is laid up with the gout. The Irish hospitality has broken out in his feet': or, to take a graver example, 'His leaf shall not wither.' Such metaphors as these, if charged with no false or alien notion, are as large in significance as in terms they are concise; but they are rather for illustration than for argument.

Abstract Nouns.—However, ambitious figures are not now a frequent fault of scientific writing; the opposite fault rather prevails, that of abstraction to the degree of vapidness; of trying "to give the flight without the bird." Thus nations are no longer, they have become nationalities; authors authorities; mind mentality;¹ events eventualities; persons personalities; characters characteristics; utterance externalisation, and so on. An eminent

¹ Should it not be mentility? (Cf. "gentility.")

critic writes of 'the vitality of the music and the mentality of the composer' (for *life* and *mind*). In a modern history I read 'That *nationality* was ultimately actually divided,'—which is inane as well as dissonant. And again, 'this machine has now become an actuality' says that the concrete has evaporated into the abstract; 'this actuality has now become a machine' would be less inept. The critical reader will often perceive that abstract phrases conceal concrete ignorance; they deal only with the symbols of things. If a name is required to mean too much it will end in meaning nothing. 'Dolus latet in generalibus.' So long as we do not educate him, or let him read newspapers, the practical man will stick to the concrete; it is the half-educated man who loves abstract terms in which he can expatiate without breaking his shins against facts. They save 'trying.' As in morals, we know how vain are principles apart from their application to life.

The propensity to write in language of too abstract a quality must then be guarded against as vague, inconclusive, or mawkish. Beware, for instance, of all nouns, substantive and adjective, ending in 'ism,' 'istic,' and 'isation,' such as 'utilisation' (use), 'localisation' (seat), 'nationalisation,' 'parliamentarisation,' 'objectification,' 'symbolisation,' 'industrialisation,' 'spiritualism,' 'capitalism,' 'agnosticism.' They are a slippery lot. One of His Majesty's Ministers used the word 'attributability' four times in one speech. Another spoke on 'trustification,' though he confessed that he did not know

what the word meant. The most grotesque instance on my notes is 'deanophelisation for the prevention of malarialisation'—this by a writer of no little repute. The word 'nationalisation' has been haunting us of late; no two disputants use it in the same sense: and with like vagueness we talk of the 'socialisation of industry,' and so forth. The 'psychologists' build up mountains of doctrine with words and phrases which evade definition. So likewise in ordinary clinical notes we find 'etiology' for 'causes'; 'symptomatology' for 'symptoms'; as journalists write of 'increase of criminality' (crime). A man has a twist, not in his mind but in his 'psychology' or 'mentality.' A crowd which used to have its tempers has now its 'psychology.' 'Humane' and 'humanity' are attenuated into 'humanitarian' and 'humanitarianism,' and so on. Is it to be only in scandal that we thirst for the actual? Scrutinise all such words suspiciously, for they come of a vacuous tribe; lazy and hazy they lend themselves to barren thinking. No fault weakens a sentence more than to put an abstract noun with a verb of action. That without abstraction we cannot think is true, but we think thus in order that we may return quickly and effectively upon the concrete. In a revise before me, 'prove their *strength*' has been well altered into 'prove their *wings*.' There are pregnant abstractions, but also evasive abstractions, these in profusion; words that still make a show while their substance has been pithed, as if by white ants.

Let us then not get out of touch with the

body of things; for as we write we are apt to think, and as we think, to live, and to teach others to live; so if our thoughts fade to the ghosts of things, if our words are disembodied of life and colour, we shall enter into practical life with full categories, but with empty hands. In the late John Simon's phrase, we shall give ourselves over to 'paper plausibilities.' The very clearness of an abstract idea is deceptive; it is transparent because it is thin, and so to the fanatic appears luminous. It is when we come to test abstract terms amidst the intricate and vivid things of experience that we are confused, perplexed, groping, uncertain; then the fanatic, escaping practical tests, gets the best of the argument. 'A reader, who would have wept over a hard case, by a general proposition is scarcely made uncomfortable.' The fire painted on the wall does not warm the old woman. A plan of a house is no substitute for a home; a map is an invaluable guide, but he who knows the map only will be a poor traveller. Let us imagine the answer which would be given in an evening newspaper to the question 'Who is my neighbour?' —the outpouring of phrases on altruism, philanthropy, magnanimity, the 'milk of human kindness,' and so forth; abstract phrases heaped up for oblivion. Yet by a plain concrete instance the answer was made memorable for ever. Even in effectual abstractions we are apt to forget the complex conditions of the particular case; in our socialistic arguments, for instance, that tough concretion, man.

Yet there is something more to be said: there

is the opposite difficulty of getting words, technical terms especially, abstract enough. In their growth from a long past, our own words have gathered each a manifold meaning. Past ideas and associations have clung to them, and given them a richer beauty; but this pictorial quality unfits them for use as scientific counters, as signs with clean and bare significations (p. 99). Translators from one tongue to another find this difficulty, that the roughly corresponding words in each have their several trains of association. The lawyer snappishly asks the medical witness to 'put that in plain english'; but an old literary language cannot be put 'plain.' A mathematician cannot substitute 'plain english' for his symbols. To obtain uncommitted words, words stripped of adventitious connotations, the scientist betakes himself usually to greek words which, for most people, are bare of a decorative past.¹ But, after all, whatsoever his choice of words, the business of the scientist, as of the rest of mankind, is *to keep a clear distinction between notions and things*, and to use no word whose meaning, in his own mind at any rate, he has not defined, and, if possible, tested by experience.

If I may quote my own words from another book²:—"By ideas it is that men lead, nations prosper, and dominions are established; by ideas dynasties are overthrown, nations convulsed, and peoples scattered; by them the tyranny of custom

¹ When for a new thing a new scientific name is wanted a greek scholar should be consulted.

² Allbutt, C., *On Professional Education*. Macmillan. 1906.

and the dogmas of schools are broken up; by them we interpret, we work, and we prophesy. But an idea is something more and other than an abstraction, it is a growth; an insight springing out of an integration of racial experience, and functioning through intellect and imagination together; therefore the mind cannot become, as Huxley said he desired for himself, 'a clear cold logic-engine in smooth working order.'"

Quotations.—I have hinted already that, as ornaments, quotations should be used sparingly. We quote for two purposes, for argument and for illustration. In quotations of argument the writer sets forth opinions of persons of authority, that he may reinforce his own theme. When the very words of an author are to be quoted, the passage must be repeated literally, distinguished by inverted commas, and so extracted as to represent fairly the context from which it is taken; for an extract, though literally accurate, may in isolation misrepresent its context. But it is often more convenient in argument to condense quoted opinions or observations into a few scrupulously fair sentences, or a summary.

As literary graces, illustrative quotations should be used sparingly: if very apt they bring the pleasure of a kind of wit; but if not so happy they load the text, and arrest or cross the flow of thought. Instead of decking his text with gems for the reader's admiration, let the author's opulence appear more intimately and allusively, as of one who writes for the wise; let it gleam

through his prose as pretty creatures through bright water. Macaulay is a notable example of splendour in allusion; in some other fine writers—as in Lamb—the accomplishment is more subtle and intimate. In one of Macaulay's Essays we read: "The Church was now victorious and corrupt. The rites of the Pantheon had passed into her worship, the subtilties of the Academy into her creed." Lamb's is a more delicate and elusive quality: "Those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques, that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a China teacup." Humour apart, there is scarce a word in this sentence which does not speak of various fancy, delicate values, and converse with the finer sources and issues of things. Among modern journalists Mr. Walkley and Mr. H. W. Nevinson possess this agreeable accomplishment. But with these fine issues and these opulences, in the prose of science we have not much to do; our prose is to be lucid, precise, unequivocal: ornament and allusion we shall for the most part deny ourselves. Clarity is our probity, and our beauty.

If this be so with forcible, apt, or elegant quotations, how carefully shall we avoid those battered nosegays, once plucked young and fresh, now wilted, with which we are prone to dress up our essays. We tremble as the sense leans towards the inevitable scrap of Horace or Shakespeare. We see "more things in heaven and earth, Horatio" making for the point of the pen!

Will the author yield to the temptation? Yes, here it comes; and there "sits Patience on her monument," and "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Of the same troop are "Nihil humani"; "Eheu! fugaces"; "Facilis descensus"; "Timeo Danaos"; "Caelum non animum mutant"; "With brains, Sir"; "Aequam memento" (recently anew in a *Times* leader); "Nullius addictus"; Oliver Twist's desire for 'more'; laying flattering unction to our souls; the curate's egg; M. Jourdain's prose; snakes in Ireland; the German camel; and all the rest of the scripful. Now such quotations do not betray the reading and taste of the essayist; they are to be picked up in the street by the poorest of us: yet, stale as they are, they are often misused, as in the well-known 'Frankenstein' example; or again, in the perennial "Laudator temporis acti," which is meaningless unless completed by some such words as 'me puero,' 'consule Planco,' or the like. 'Pour encourager les autres' is now often quoted without its ironical property. Sometimes, it is true, a stale quotation or trope gains a new freshness by being set, perhaps humorously, in a strange light; but this is a rare success. If adorn we must, let our gems be quarried by ourselves, and used with a full sense of the context whence they came; and let us take care that this is the sense of our own context also, and a happy and fresh illustration of it.

Sound and Rhythm.—Some hard-headed persons insist that to compose for sound is, or may be, to satisfy the ear rather than the mind; that the

more sensitive the ear, and the more subtly favoured, the less may be the part of the mind in the theme. Thinking may so become almost a superfluity. Somebody said that Plutarch would have made Pompey win the battle of Pharsalia had it better suited the turn of his sentence. It is in rhetoric and in poetry perhaps rather than in prose that this peril is insidious, and with these my little book is not concerned. But, whether in poetry or prose, to say that with fine sounds to the ear we may cheat the understanding, is one thing; it is another to apprehend lest, if sound and sense be fine alike, the sound may so charm the ear that the sense may not pass into the understanding. In sweet sound and pregnant meaning the English Bible and Cranmer's Collects are almost incomparable; but the more sweetly in them the sound travels through the ear, the more surely does the sense steal into the heart. I suppose for all readers, whether they analyse their sensations or not, harsh, jingling, or ugly prose is tedious or even intolerable. The attention wanders, the patience fails. So it was said of a certain author that "he wrote logically, truthfully, energetically, but rarely with much ease or charm"; yet, as we see in dancing children, or the pulsations of a waterfall, rhythm pervades all things. It lies deep in nature.

I must not tarry however to amuse myself and the reader with the sweet rhythms and tones of literary prose, nor even with the felicity of some medical prose, such as of Celsus, Watson, or

Paget ; I shall be better employed in this warning—that if we seek merely, or even mainly, for chiming words our message will decline ; or, like a painted woman, become odious. When in Pater or Stevenson—not the worst of such sinners by any means—when even in their complexion I see the paint I am Philistine enough to close the book. Sometimes, even in Virgil or Tennyson, in the lusciousness of form we tremble for the substance. If, as we read, we meditate first not on the bloom on the phrase but on the core of the thought, the art is good ; if the phrase is all our charm the art is decadent. In the sentence, ‘I will answer him according to the multitude of his idols,’—who, as he takes this message to himself, thinks then of the words of it ? Or, to repeat (p. 79) Bright’s well-known appeal : “The Angel of Death is abroad through the land ; we may almost hear the beating of his wings,” who of his hearers thought then of the words ? When men began to think ‘How far away it would have been had the orator said the *flapping* of his wings,’ the spell was dissolving. This is literature however, and in letters sweetness is a hardly dispensable element ; scientific prose is rarely literature. Literature is not merely the art of expression but also the creation of thought and emotion ; a blend of strength of understanding with beauty of sound and cadence. Now and again, some great work even of science appears in a form which men will not forget, but ordinarily scientific language has to be a vehicle of correct thinking

rather than a monument of thought; it is the sacrifice of the scientific treatise to discharge its burden into the stream of knowledge and then to be itself consigned to the cockloft.

Nevertheless if, in saying that scientific prose should run pleasingly as well as forcibly and lucidly, I cannot claim for the first quality the importance of the other two, yet I cannot too often repeat that a harmoniously written paper will make its way when the same argument expressed in ugly phrase, when, as Ascham says, "It doth rather trot and hobble than run smoothly," has no appeal. Bad prose is bad business, even if the badness be nothing worse than discord. Let the ear then have its way as the phrases are conned; rougher rhythms and inharmonious sounds will drag; as we read we resent something wrong, so that we hesitate, and look back to see where was the jar or the limp. *E.g.* 'A more accommodating denomination is *commonly* given to it.' '*Gratitude* for his *rectitude*'; 'an organisational centre of crystallisation'; '*necessarily* temporary'; 'very *nearly* entirely'; 'so that it at once commenced'; 'the native rulers were as a rule, etc.' The cadence of a chief sentence in a recent report ended with 'unsolicitedly.' And does not this sentence remind us of a looper caterpillar?—'This revelation was the inauguration of a new dispensation, not the termination; also this new dispensation,' etc., etc. 'Of all I have *known* he could least hold his *own*,' is not only an untimely assonance but imports the alien rhythm of verse. Suppose you

have written, 'recurrences of this kind are found to abound'—you read it aloud; your ear is set on edge; where was it? You look back, and abate the nuisance. In a passage of otherwise pleasant prose this clause, 'one venial fault frustrated the effect,' displeased my ear, though I suspect the jingle was deliberate.

In scientific prose then we shall carry our pains so far as to avoid jingles, lilt, harsh assonances and sequences, unrhythmical and discordant clauses. We shall learn what to avoid; then we may try to use dexterously, though still frugally, some of the charms of style; such as allusion, assonance, alliteration, rhythm, cadence, harmony.

It is often hard to have to surrender a just and cogent word because it is dissonant with some neighbouring word which is indispensable; yet it often happens not only that the difficulty may be turned but that the labour issues in a still more effective phrase: *e.g.* in one of my examples I had to translate 's'est émancipée et a pris la robe virile,' etc. I had written 'Emancipated itself and put on the robe of manhood'—this jingle on re-perusal was unpleasant, for manhood was not wanted to emphasise emancipate; but it cost some minutes to hit on 'came of age' instead. Again, in another I had written, 'This is treacherous ground even for a philosopher to tread upon,' and on revision noted the useless assonance of 'treacherous' and 'tread'; yet to find a better word than treacherous was not easy: a moment later however I perceived that 'to tread upon'

was tautological, and the deletion of these words while relieving the ear improved the sentence. Consider this sentence, 'To maintain' (the higher life) 'against the slow stain of the world's contagion,' etc. 'Slow stain' is good, so for 'maintain' the author ought to have substituted some such word as 'cherish': yet even then three long *a*'s are cloying. The author quoted had stolen and spoiled a line from Shelley's *Adonais*, which ran "From the contagion of the world's slow stain," etc.

This kind of fastidiousness is not peddling, no more so than a prejudice in favour of the singer who sings in tune; without a cultivation of this taste our pleasure in reading would be rudimentary. Yet current writing is full of vile assonances, clumsy or lilting accents, awkward quantities, choppy or monotonously equal periods. Surely his ear is blunt who can allow himself to write 'Except septic causes intercept it'; 'persons apparently healthy frequently find a difficulty'; 'the prepossession acts hostilely upon the facts' (hostilely, like 'prolixly' and 'reflexly,' is an ugly formation); 'it is supposed by some that this summary'; 'he was right when he wrote'; 'I fear it will not appear nearly so clearly'; 'at a date so late as 1673 ablation of this part was,' etc.; 'with uniform formality'; 'a defect in this respect'; 'probably actually'; 'the basis of this thesis is the cases'; 'teach each of them'; 'occasionally sporadically'—sentences readily culled from essays in my basket.

Collision of vowel sounds and other vocal hiatus

are often distressing: *e.g.* 'Maria(r) Ann'; 'a raw (r) egg'; 'did I hear right?' (for 'aright') (p. 88). A collision of *s*'s is very unpleasant. Some words, such as 'valuelessness,' can never be tolerable and should be discarded; and all badly balanced words must be kept at any rate out of the principal parts of sentences, such as the beginning and the end.

If Alliteration and Assonance when out of harmony jar upon us, when used harmoniously they are impressive or delightful. "The firm earth itself, unfixed from its foundations, was seen to be but an atom in the awful vastness of the universe" (Froude). Mr. Bradley¹ cites "*duorum bonorum virorum*" where the *du-*, *bon-*, and *vir-* are unaccented, so that the stress falls upon these sonorous genitives plural. But, as I have said, the paint, the sense of artifice, must be unseen. In the following sentence of Sir Thomas Browne the artifice is a little too apparent: "To be knaved out of our graves, to have our skulls made drinking bowls, and our bones turned into pipes, to delight and sport our enemies, are tragical abominations escaped in *burning burials*"; yet the idea of the invention is so impressive we pardon the ingenuities. The chief assonances (which I have marked) are moreover the less obtrusive as they are variously embedded in the consonants; and all the finer vowel sounds are harmonised. Yet beauty comes perilously near counterfeit. In the following lines the peril is incurred: "Like a glow-worm golden In a dell of

¹ *Making of English*, 1904, p. 77.

dew." Here the paint is visible (p. 171). Addison thought Milton's "And brought into the World a World of Woe" an affectation; but it is too passionate for affectation, too sublime to have a conceit of its vesture. Yet it would be easy to quote many beautiful passages, say from Ruskin, which in this respect overstep the limit of chastity; easier still to find in much recent and lauded prose page upon page in which alliteration and assonance are substituted for inward significance, and so with slender reward of beauty. From Ruskin let us compare these two passages; the one beautiful, the second, in which the art is forced; indeed the vowel sounds are not harmonised: (1) "They have taken with them to the grave their powers, their honours and their errors; but they have left us their adoration"; (2) "though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of his fields, than there is while the animation of his multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line."

Albeit, as means of emphasis, such artifices are not alien from scientific prose, especially in large or conclusive periods. In this short sentence the alliteration is certainly emphatic; and was no doubt intentional: "Men of all conceivable opinions are custodians of some constituent of truth." Here the vowels are all represented, in one quality or another. But in another sentence—"that a reasonable time should be given to research he readily

realised,' the alliteration is bad, because, as the sentence is not emphatic, its thin and superfluous assonances annoy the ear. Echoes may be awakened by symphonic vowels and consonants (such as 'faithful people,' etc., p. 156); the music of the sentence may steal into our ears on many cadences; but, on the other hand, trippings, jingles and clinks that creep in furtively must be vigilantly abated.

Accent and Quantity are more important in scientific and other practical exposition, and more telling than assonance. Thus in part emphasis may be properly distributed; and doubt, circumspection, meditation, energy, or rapidity are signified. I have quoted (p. 80): "The wall gave shelter to a few small birds, and to a solitary man that watched them," etc. The three long syllables 'few small birds' are scarcely volatile enough, and 'solitary man' is on the other hand too rapid for stillness and liveness. I wonder if the charming author would have accepted this version: "The wall gave shelter to a few little birds, and to one lone man," etc.? As we read, the ear is quicker than we know, or should be; in this passage—"darkness out of which you can hear the voice of the night wind and the dull boom of the disturbed sea"—he who can read 'disturb'd,' even to himself, may fear he has no sense of rhythm. Turn again to the verses on p. 156, l. 3 and compare the dactyls and the spondees. But again, in seeking balance and rhythm, we must beware of versification; *e.g.* this half pentameter 'ap-parently perfectly well' is too

tripping. Even a fine rhythm, if not varied in form and time, becomes monotonous: the gravity of spondees may drawl into sluggishness, or dactyls trip into levity.

Finally (p. 138), "beauty of style and harmony, grace and good rhythm, depend on simplicity; I mean the true simplicity of a rightly and nobly ordered mind and character—not that other simplicity which is only a euphemism for folly."¹

Stops.—Many authors leave the stops to the typewriter, or the printer's reader; a slovenly habit: the stops should be inserted by the author himself upon his manuscript, and carefully revised by him in proof. A note should be made on the MS. that the author's punctuation is to be followed exactly. Too often typewritten theses are delivered as they come from the machine, unrevised and abounding in clerical errors; but the author is responsible, not the typewriter. In German books, where too often long and ill-built sentences stand especially in need of careful punctuation, the use of it is even more careless and unprincipled than with us. The comma seems to be scattered with a pepperpot, as a cheap decoration. Yet originally the 'comma' was not the mark itself but the section enclosed by it; St. Jerome says of Hosea 'Commaticus est, et quasi per sententias loquens.' The mark itself indicated to the reader a brief pause, the semicolon a somewhat longer pause, the

¹ Plato, *Rep.* 400 c.

colon a pause longer still, the full stop a rest. For well-built sentences of any length semicolons and even colons are necessary. There is a false notion abroad that there must not be more than one semicolon in a sentence. Dashes are often used in place of the comma; but the dash is to mark the interruption of some demur or aside; it is a note not of construction but of intercalation: like the parenthesis, it is to be kept in strict subjection. Hyphens are rarely wanted; compound words are for the most part incongruous with the English tongue. By the semicolon we divide the longer sentences into clauses; but, besides this use, this stop and the colon often give emphasis, even in short sentences, by bringing into closer apposition some independent or grammatically discontinuous antithesis, reinforcement, or illustration which, if carried over to a following sentence, would have a less instant effect. Thus, 'The Philistine lords command: commands are no constraints.' 'They have repudiated all liability: we must reconsider our position.' An ordinary writer would have inserted commas and 'ands' after 'command' and after 'liability.' 'Le système ne manque pas d'équilibre: il manque seulement de vérité.' Henry Sidgwick used the colon freely, especially to mark out aphorismic clauses.

In the following lines the semicolon is well employed:

The platform is small, but gives room for them all;
And they are dancing merrily.

The next quotation I give as an example of the right use of both semicolon and colon :

Fathers are wont to lay up for their sons ;
Thou for thy son are bent to lay out all :
Sons wont to nurse their parent in old age ;
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son.

Even the comma in its degree may have this emphatic value, as in 'Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.' 'I cannot help him, now.' 'This we desired, in vain.' In "The light that never was, on sea or land" the comma is said to be Wordsworth's. Mr. Binyon may forgive me if in the second of his fine lines I venture to insert a comma after *Amiata*, where it seems to me to add a contemplative note to the passage :

*Amiata's mist apparelled head,
Amiata, that sailors watch on wide Tyrrhenian wave ;*

as it does likewise amid these words 'the wind passeth over it, and it is gone.'

I read the other day, "There lately died in Vienna, I think"—the awkward doubt is removed by carrying the comma two words back. In "records by scribes who are usually accurate," a comma should have followed 'scribes' as the credit is general, not particular. "It had two gates on its East and West sides" (insert a comma after 'gates'). So again we may read 'Gentlemen do not spit,' or with a comma before 'do': 'She stopped crying,' or 'She stopped, crying.' In "he was a very natural, and a very loveable, person," the second intrusive comma throws into emphasis

'person'—an unemphatic word. The comma, if inserted at the end of a clause, is often forgotten at its beginning, where it may be more needed; *e.g.* "Cases come before me which although different in character, are imperfectly reported" (insert comma before 'although'). As a larger illustration of the functions of the comma I will quote as follows:

then, in an hour,
Ensnared, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foes' derision, captive, poor and blind,
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves.

Note the absence of the comma in 'poor and blind,' its insertion in the last line.

In order to distribute the several stops properly the author will find it helpful to read and listen to his sentences, as if overheard; then he will perceive the places of the longer and shorter pauses, some structural, some emotional (*cf.* Buffon, p. 10). The frequency of the comma in good prose varies as the habit of the author; but in general terms it may be said that the finer the articulation of the sentence the fewer they may be. To block out ill-distributed matter by stops is a device of bad workmanship. To trust to the fallacious comma a sentence such as this, 'I am a prisoner unfortunately you are my judge,' might lead to misunderstanding.

To me the custom of hedging round adverbs with commas (unless where in midsentence a subclause is wanted) thus: —, however, —, perhaps, —, therefore, —, indeed, spoils the flow.

The reader should note that stops may take

the place of coupling words: a comma may often supplant 'and,' or 'but,' or 'as' (p. 151); a semicolon 'therefore'; and so on: we have seen that a colon by supplanting a short phrase may give terseness and point. Again we may write 'Courage and faith and devotion are baffled' or 'Courage, faith, devotion are baffled'; in either form we impart a high note which we lose in the trivial form 'Courage, faith and devotion are baffled.' In this sentence, 'In my success you repudiated me: will you receive me in my peril?' the colon avoids 'now that I come to you in my peril,' etc.

As to young writers stops are nothing, so they are profuse with copulatives; they think every joint must be oiled with 'and,' 'while' or 'whilst,' 'since'; yet there is more hope for an abrupt than for a slippery style. Journalists, on the other hand, for smartness' sake, will jolt us with a full stop where a semicolon only was wanted; *e.g.* "There are some people to whom a walk in an English wood is as exciting as a journey through a primeval jungle. To whom the commonest birds and plants and flowers have a perpetual touch of novelty." Here, by substitution of full stop for semicolon, we are treated to a sentence containing no verb, and pulled up with a jerk. When testing your sentences by reading, never rely upon any existing stop or stops; for the moment they must be disregarded.

Little Counsels.—Do not carry the abbreviations of the note-book into the essay, except of course in schedules and other tables.

Whether it be by the generosity of typewriters, or the waywardness of manuscripts, that *capitals* are sprinkled capriciously about the pages of theses, I cannot tell. In modern printing capitals are fewer than of old; they break the line of the text, and should be still more sparse. In specific names, such as 'Diabetes mellitus,' it is correct to give a capital initial to the substantive only. The capital letter is due to all proper names, so we write "the language of the Greeks"; but the name of a language, as greek or latin, is not a "proper name."

Contractions.—I do not say that 'etc.' is not to be used, but its use should be rare, and chiefly for omission of parts of quotations, and the like. When used by the author to eke out his own matter, or to save himself trouble, the reader is disposed to exclaim, "If you have anything more to say, say it; if not, finish your sentence properly": 'etc.' conveys little meaning, if any. So in the finished copy it is better to use words for such contractions as 'e.g.' 'i.e.' 'viz.'; and, except of course in statistics and calculations, a few figures may look better in words than as numerals.

Sometimes in citation of authors by name I am asked *What is the best usage as to titles of courtesy?* Are we to say 'Roe says such and such a thing, but by Doe the contrary is asserted'? The best custom in quoting living authors, either of our own country or well known to most of us, is to give them their proper titles; we should say 'Sir John Doe believes such and such a thing'; 'Professor

Roe infers from his experiments,' etc., etc. On an author's decease, and his promotion to the immortality of letters, the title is dropped. To the names of foreign authors we do not prefix a title, even during their lives, except perhaps in the case of those who are socially known to many of us.

Spelling.—I am one of those who can spell; such memory as I have is eye memory. Nevertheless in the matter of spelling I confess myself to be in secret a libertine; on this side of revolution. Only by social pressure and the printer am I held in subjection; for english spelling is as wasteful and otiose as are german genders and declensions: its vagaries have not the charm of symmetry, the interest of significance, nor the sanction of history. I have a sneaking sympathy with Lady Maria, "'Tis well enough spelt for any person of fashion." Yet even so doughty a knight as Landor found custom too much for single combat; reformers must wait until some strategical move can be made all along the line. Some candidates, I see, spell 'aneurysm' with an *i* in place of *y*; to the use itself I have no objection, but we must bear in mind we are entering upon no trifling task. Are we prepared to write also hidrophobia, dispepsia, analisis, etimology? Unless we are bold enough for this had we not better be content with such anarchy as we have?

The pedantry of departure from customary use in the spelling of some foreign names and nouns is to be deprecated; names such as Virgil, Mahomet, Koran, etc., etc., which during long and storied generations

have gained a place in our tongue, and carry with them old and various associations. I warm to Horace and Plutarch, Terence and Aristotle; and desiderate Tully. How much should we lose were we to discard Avicenna for 'Ibn Sina.' An English author, the other day, wrote of Joan of Arc as 'St. Jeanne d'Arc'!—poor wraith! Or how sequacious it is to write of a 'questionnaire' (presumably pronounced with a *k*) when *questionary* is at hand (*New English Dictionary*). When the adoption of a foreign word has come about let us keep it of our family (p. 68). One day a bright little boy was telling me a story of 'King Nut,' whom I took to be some fairy king; but he proved to be our familiar ancestor Canute, named, in some pedantic school, 'Cnut'! Snags of this kind disturb the patterns and the stream of prose.

Models.—In conclusion, the student may look for some advice concerning the use of great prose writers as models. Where in this book I have used the word 'style,' it has been but trivially and cursorily. I have said that matter and form are as inseparable as skin and bone; and again and again I have urged that slovenly writing is slovenly thinking (pp. 30, 32), and obscure writing, for the most part, confused or unripe thinking. To recommend 'models of style' therefore seems to me to be a counsel of mimicry, and a perpetuation of fallacy. Let the student read by all means, and read widely; not to imitate individual form but to store his mind with ideas and conceptions, and with words in their manifold significance. Let him

converse with great authors, in poetry as well as in prose; for poetry is literature at its highest and strongest; and almost all poets have written fine prose. I must add that without comparison the values of words and idioms can hardly be appreciated, or a refined use of them attained; which implies some familiarity with at least two languages.¹

Moreover, the student must train his mind to think and imagine continuously without fatigue, as he trains his body to endurance. In current journalism the crafty paragraph writer is but too well aware that his readers cannot attend to more than half-a-dozen lines together—say for one minute and three-quarters at most; he stops therefore, leaves a space with a black line athwart it, that his shortwinded reader may rest; then off he starts again, on the same matter! The more vigorous reader, supposing this matter, or one aspect of it, to be at an end, lightly leaps the gap to find himself still plodding in the same furrow. Be assured there is no worse kind of ‘style’ for imitation than Seneca’s invention of snippets.

My advice on models is then: Imitate no one; read to strengthen and enlarge your imagination, your understanding, and your language; try to build in the matter you acquire with that which you had, and in the mind’s eye *to see it*, as it were on a plan or model outside yourself (p. 32); observing where its features are amorphous or its outlines

¹ Mr. Willis (*loc. cit.*) points out that translations often lie midway between two idioms and spoil both. Thus, in translating french, for ‘now’ (as in ‘now listen!’) the translator has to choose between ‘or,’ ‘done,’ ‘maintenant’; and so on.

faint. In the following sentence the author had not *seen* his thought, or he would never have written: "If we imagine *ourselves* standing *exactly* on a pole of the earth, with a flagstaff fastened in the ground, we should be carried round the flagstaff by the earth's rotation. . . ." (Where was the flagstaff?) If as we read we do not *see* the process or scene described, either the subject is still a very obscure one, or the description at fault. I have just read an article in *Nature* (March 16, 1922) on *Photosynthesis* by Professor Baly, a good example of visible presentation of an intricate subject. Let the student then relinquish some of his many journals to learn a few descriptive passages such as the lines on Shakespeare's Cliff in *Lear*, on Saturn's Vale in *Hyperion*, and so forth. Clear vision will make a sound style ; original insight an original style.

Force, lucidity, unity, simplicity, economy of expression are virtues which we may all attain ; originality will be as God pleases.

APPENDIX TO PAGE 143

THE following are words seeming to be latin, but not so in the ordinary sense; they were never in general use among the Romans. For instance, to translate possible by *possibilis*, or supposition by *suppositio* would be a gross blunder. Many such words were invented in post-classical times to translate the metaphysical terminology of Aristotle; they were at no time part of spoken latin. Thus *immediate* is the equivalent of Aristotle's *amesos*; and *predicament* of his *categoria*.

The chief of these words are:—*substance, quality, essence, quantity, immediate, special, general, supposition, predicament, possible, principle, entity, actual, relative, element, premiss, term, instance, conclusion, proposition, subject, accident, definition, passive, affection, capable, susceptible, demonstrate, negative*, and a few more. For this demonstration I am indebted to George Willis' *Philosophy of Speech*. I may add that scholastic latin was however a very precise instrument; not least because it had taken into itself many idioms from the greek.

INDEX

- Abstract nouns, 162
- Adjectives, order of, 98, 104
 - effective, 103
 - exuberance of, 103
- Adverbs, position of, 95
- Alliteration, 156, 175
- Ambiguity, 83
- Assonance, 156, 175
- Atypical, 121
- Beginnings, 22
- Biological types, 121
- Byplay, 21
- Cadence, 155
- Capital letters, 183
- Causa, vera*, 142
- Chapter, the, 70
- Clichés, 108
- Composing, method of, 12
- Conjunctions, 63
- Construction, uniform, 62
 - indirect, 69
- Contractions, 183
- Corrupt language, 36
- Crux, 142
- Decay of language, 36
- Definitions, 8
- Degrees, exercises for, 2
- Devices of style, 154
- Dialectic, 50
- Dictation, 27
- Diffuseness, 78
- Discordances, 82, 102, 173
- Disorderly style, 33
- Drafts, 12-17
- Easy style, 28
- Economy of phrase, 14
- Egotism, 56
- Emphasis, 96, 153
- Endings, 25
- Entity, 122
- Errors, smaller, 63
- Etymology, 10, 99
- Exercises for Degrees, 2
- Expletives, 152
- Fact, 116
- False concords, 60
- Fashions in words, 139
- Finicking, 38
- Foreign words, 68
- Form, 9, 171
- Formalism, 35
- Gaudiness, 39
- Genitive case, 65
- Gerunds, 56
- Grammar, 51
- Growth and decay, 36
- Harmony, 172
- Humour, 157
- Hypens, 179
- Hypothesis, 110, 113, 116
- Ignorance, 3
- Infinitive, split, 88
- Intransitive verbs, 59
- Irony, 157
- Italics, 153
- Jargon, 41
- Jingles, 173
- Language, how formed, 49
- Latin ornaments, 142
- Latter, the, 64
- Lineage of words, 101
- Logical order, 19, 81
- Lucidity, 31
- Meaning, sense of, 16, 32
- Metaphor, 158
- Method, 12
- Mind's eye, 32, 187
- Models, 185
- Muddle, 29
- Names, 8
- Niggling, 39
- Nominatives, 54
- Notions and things, 166

- Obscure writing, 81
- Obsolescent words, 45
- Oddities, 40
- Official style, 137
- Order, logical, 15, 17, 19
 - of words, 92, 154
- Originality, 187
- Ornaments, 15
- Ornate alias, 145

- Painted style, 171
- Paragraph, the, 71
- Parenthesis, 88
- Participles, 56, 60
- Pedantry, 37, 50, 68
- Periods, order of, 69
- Philosophy, 47
- Place clauses, 92
- Plain english, 166
- Plan of essay, 12
- Plurals, 67
- Preciosity, 37
- Precision, 30
- Pronouns, 52
- Punctuation, 158, 178
- Purists, 41

- Quotations, 108, 167

- Redundancy, 147, 151
- References, 26
- Reiteration, 145, 156
- Research, 5
- Revision, 17
- Rhythm, 21, 155, 170

- Selection, 18
- Sentence, the, 16, 73, 84
 - conditional, 83
 - motley, 82
 - periodic and loose, 80, 84
 - trailing, 83
- Simplicity, 140, 178
- Sincerity, 141
- Singular and plural, 61, 66, 67
- Slang, 42
- Snippets, 75, 186
- Sounds, sweet, 170

- Spelling, 184
- Stops, 178
 - how to place, 181
- Style, 9, 14, 28, 51, 182
 - abstract, 163
 - affected, 136
 - easy, 28
 - laborious, 138, 140
- Subjects of essays, 3
- Subjunctive mood, 155
- Subtlety, 50
- Summaries, 22, 157
- Superfine language, 136
- Suspensions, 85, 91, 157
- Syndrome, 67
- Synonyms, 10, 37

- Tags, 108
- Tautology, 144
- Tawdriness, 40
- Tenses, 58, 60
- Terms, 8
- Theory, 46, 109
- Theses, 2
- Time and Place clauses, 92
- Titles, 7
 - of courtesy, 183
- Training to think, 186
- Transitive verbs, 59
- Translations, 11
- Tumid style, 136
- Type, 119, 122
- Typical features, 121

- Verbs, 59, 102
 - values of, 103
- Vital detail, 19
- Vocabularian ruts, 107
- Vocabularies, meagre, 11, 104
- Vulgar phrases, 44

- Woolly writing, 149
- Words, as symbols, 10
 - choice of, 48, 99, 155
 - growth of, 102
 - idle, 149
 - misused, 109-136
 - order of, 92

